

EP SM

EVIDENCE-BASED PREVENTION OF SPORTING-RELATED MATCH-FIXING

Co-funded by the
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ACTION PLAN UNITED KINGDOM

Coordinator



Project partner





National Action Plan: Football

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1 Introduction

English sport governing bodies, while undoubtedly recognising the potential for corruption to impact negatively on the players, fans and clubs of national sports, have largely ignored the potential impact to come from sport related betting. The focus, driven by media attention in high profile cases, has often been on betting related corruption limiting the investigation into solely sports related instances.

The Erasmus+ project EPOSM aims to raise knowledge and awareness about sporting-related match-fixing focusing on various sports. In the United Kingdom, the project focuses on football, tennis, and cricket. In 2020 an online survey was conducted among respondents in these three sport disciplines. Dr Argyro Elisavet Manoli who led the research in the United Kingdom is a renowned expert on the area of sport corruption and match-fixing, with her work on the topic being published and presented in numerous academic publications and international conferences world-wide. On the basis of these results, Loughborough University developed a concrete action plans for these three sport disciplines. The action plans will serve as roadmaps toward raising knowledge, awareness and moral judgement on sporting-related match-fixing in the United Kingdom and were implemented during several workshops with relevant actors in British football, tennis, and cricket.

2 Project Overview

The EPOSM “Evidence-Based Prevention of Sporting-Related Match-fixing” is co-funded by the Erasmus+ Program of the European Union.

From January 2020 to December 2021, the collaborative partnership between European academic organizations and expert partners assessed sporting-related match-fixing in various sports disciplines on a European basis and pursues the following objectives:

- Raising awareness about the prevalence of sporting-related match-fixing
- Stimulating moral judgment, assuming that sporting-related match-fixing is a clear failure threatening the credibility and attractiveness of sports
- Sharing and transferring knowledge on sporting-related match-fixing through the organization(s) of a training procedure

Coordinated by the Ghent University, the Croatian Olympic Committee, Panathlon International, the Utrecht University, the CSCF - Foundation for Sports Integrity, the University of Lausanne, the ICES - International Center Ethics in Sport, the Loughborough



University, the IRIS - Institut de Relations Internationales et Stratégiques, the Play Fair Code as ordinary partners, and the Council of Europe as an associated partner, take part in the project.

In the first phase of the project, theoretical principles were derived through the collection and dissemination of an international and target group-specific survey on the subject of match-fixing in general, and sport-related manipulation, in particular. The survey results are displayed in section 2.1.

As a result of the findings, individual criteria for the National Action Plans and awareness-raising workshops were generated by the project partners under the guidance of Panathlon International.

Based on these criteria, the project partners developed national action plans and workshops for their respective countries and the sports disciplines selected.

2.1 Results of the EPOSM Survey in United Kingdom

The survey was created and disseminated in the first stage of the EPOSM project, the main results of are summarised within this section. The complete survey results for the United Kingdom are attached to this document.

The complete study involved 5000 participants from all over Europe from many different sports including football, tennis, basketball, hockey, handball, and cricket. The individuals involved in these sports were made up of athletes, coaches, committee members and officials. With regards to the United Kingdom specifically, it can be observed that a total of 1278 individuals were surveyed within the three sports, with a total of 1039 from football.

	Total (n = 1278)	Football (n = 1039)	Tennis (n = 113)	Cricket (n = 126)
Language				
English	100%	100%	100%	100%
Gender				
Man	94,2%	96,1%	73,5%	97,6%
Woman	5,7%	3,8%	26,5%	2,4%
Other	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%
I prefer not to say	0,1%	0,1%	0,0%	0,0%
How are (were) you mainly related to this sport?				
Athlete	57,0%	56,1%	61,1%	61,1%



Coach / Trainer / Assistant coach	8,8%	9,6%	7,1%	4,0%
Medical staff	2,6%	2,6%	3,5%	1,6%
Referee / (Video) Assistant Referee / (Fourth) official / Jury member	4,1%	4,4%	3,5%	2,4%
Board member / Assembly member / Manager of a sport club	5,6%	5,7%	6,2%	4,8%
Other	17,9%	18,1%	14,2%	19,8%

Figure 1: Overview of the respondent's characteristics (n= 1278)

In total, 150 individuals across the three sports noted that they knew at least one person who had been approached to fix a contest, this was 22% of the entire international total, a large proportion.

	“Do you personally know anyone who has been approached to fix a game / match?”
Yes, I know one person	98
Yes, I know two persons	37
Yes, I know three or more persons	15
No	1128

Figure 2: Respondents who personally knew someone who had been approached for match-fixing (n=1278)

In the United Kingdom study, nearly 7% of respondents confirmed that they themselves had been approached to fix a contest. The study also aimed to find out what inducements, if any, had been offered to confirm the fix. It was found that in some cases, respondents had been offered a financial incentive of up to £5000, however, other inducements were often lower and even included gift cards, phones and a guitar.

Sport discipline	“Have you yourself ever been approached to fix a game / match?”	
	No	Yes
Football (n = 1039)	964	75 (7,2%)
Tennis (n = 113)	105	8 (7,1%)
Cricket (n = 126)	123	3 (2,4%)

Figure 3: Cases of having been approached themselves in United Kingdom sample (n = 1278)

To further understand this context, it is important to consider the motives, and those differences, in the corrupt approaches being made in this study, betting related and non-betting related match fixing. In total, 36 respondents indicated that they were only approached for a non-betting-related proposal.



More specifically, in the case that only a non-betting-related proposal took place, the respondents indicated:

- 21 times that the proposal was made to prevent relegation of a specific club or player.
- 14 times that the proposal was made to enable a specific club or player to win the championship,
- 9 times that the proposal was made to determine who the next-round opponent would be, and
- 4 times that the proposal aimed to make the competition or tournament more exciting.

The level of competition where these athletes participated when the approaches took place were professional (7), semi-professional (20) and amateur (9). Rather concerningly, just under half of those athletes were threatened or pressured (16), compared to twenty (20) who were not, during the approach to fix a contest.

	Total (n = 79)	Football (n = 69)	Tennis (n = 7)	Cricket (n = 3)
What was the motive of the people who approached you?				
Only betting-related match-fixing	22	21	1	0
Both betting- and non-betting-related match-fixing	17	16	1	0
Only non-betting-related match-fixing	36	29	5	2
Both non-betting-related and “other motive”*	1	1	0	0
Other motive*	2	1	0	1
I don’t know	1	1	0	0

*The exact “other motive” could not be identified due to a software bug.

Figure 4: Motive of the match-fixing cases (n = 79)

Overall, 156 participants reported that they had been approached to fix contests themselves. Of this 156, 126 respondents (80.8%) noted that they had reported these approaches while 30 respondents (19.2%) had not reported the approaches made to them. When reporting the approaches that had been made, several different approaches were utilised. While athletes largely reported these approaches to either their teammates or coaching team, a significant number also reported approaches to their governing body/sports federation.



*The sum of the figures exceeds 126, because multiple answers were possible to the question. *Figure 5: Reporting suspicions or experiences of match-fixing to anyone (n = 126)*

Finally, participants were asked whether their clubs paid attention to match fixing. Of the 382 respondents who indicated that they were still involved in a sport club, 68 respondents (17,8%) indicated that their sport club does not pay attention to match-fixing and 43 respondents (11,3%) indicated that they don't know if their sport club pays attention to match-fixing.

The data that has been collected through this survey has provided valuable insight into the methods of approach made to those involved in sport within the United Kingdom. Future prevention efforts can use this data as a way of making approaches more effective, for example, focus may be directed towards ways of reporting approaches through the desired channels.

3 United Kingdom: A Current View

The following section will provide country specific sporting examples, legislation and action plans which make up the existing measures that are employed in an effort to control, and minimise, varying forms of integrity issues.

Despite the implementation of these measures there have still been a significant number of match fixing attempts, and no doubt successes, in football, tennis and cricket within the United Kingdom.

By way of example, in the sport of Football there have been several match fixing scandals in the 21st century, which almost exclusively involved male professional footballers, at varying levels of play including amateur, semi-professional and professional teams and leagues. These instances have gained significant media attention and left the sports fearing that they



are facing an epidemic of various forms of corruption. Although in the sports in focus there appears to have been very little attention paid to non-betting related match fixing.

However, not all match fixing happens in relation to betting, where the financial profit of individuals who seek to alter the course or eventual result of a contest is the main aim.

Therefore, steps should be taken to fully understand the complexities of match fixing for sporting-related and non-betting related reasons.

3.1 United Kingdom Football Integrity Management

There are many mechanisms that can be used in the United Kingdom to counteract match fixing in sport. From a legal standpoint, the Bribery Act 2010 and the Fraud Act 2006, while not specifically designed for application in sport have attempted to control criminal acts in this field. Those that engage in corrupt behaviours such as matching fixing and break these regulations can be either fined or jailed, powers that have been used in the most serious cases of sport corruption.

In addition, the Sports Betting Integrity Forum (SBIF), established in 2012 works with a range of other stakeholders including the Department for Digital, Culture Media and Sport (DCMS), Gambling Commission and the Sports Betting Intelligence Unit (SBIU) to minimise and control illegal betting.

In the United Kingdom the sport of football is governed by the four separate Football Associations representing England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, all whom have their own methods of managing game manipulation. The English FA state that it *“wants to preserve what is great in the beautiful game and has devised rules regarding betting in football to help protect the integrity and future of football.”*

The FA do not make a clear distinction between betting and integrity instead viewing them as parts of the same issue. In addition, the literature produced by the organisation relies heavily on punishment. Players, coaches and officials are warned that their involvement in betting related activities are likely to leave them at risk of very severe punishment. There is little in the way of educational opportunities for those that wish to gain knowledge about the subject in an effort to avoid becoming victims themselves. The FA do make brief reference to the passing of insider information but again, this is linked towards betting.

“If you attempt to match fix, or breach the FA betting rules, or pass on inside information, you are likely to get caught and receive a FA charge.”



The FA does maintain contact details for reporting approaches made to those involved within the football industry from players to match officials.

“If you are approached, or are aware of anything suspicious regarding a game that you have officiated then you must report it to The FA.”

This appears to all be focused at the top level of the game and a quick internet search by a concerned player at grassroots level wishing to report an act that they believe contravenes the integrity of a football competition is likely to leave them frustrated.

4 Workshop Design, Structure and Outcome

4.1 Workshop Design

As part of this project a number of workshops were completed, taking place across all sports: football, tennis and cricket. In each sport a total of 30 individuals were reached. Workshops were scheduled to last 30 minutes, which included questions from participants.

The intention, in the first instance, was to attempt to conduct as many of these workshops in person as possible. In some instances, this was not possible due to ongoing restrictions and there Microsoft Teams was used instead.

4.2 Workshop Structure

The structure of each workshop corresponded to each individual sport (football, tennis and cricket) and the participants. For example, existing procedures dealing with match fixing will be highlighted in a particular sport.

An introduction to the topic that will be covered in the session, in this case, match fixing.

While participants were familiar with the concept of match fixing, a lot had not considered that it could be done without the need for manipulation of the betting markets as the intended outcome.

To aid with the understanding of the concept of non-betting related match fixing an example was given, this was not solely made up of examples from the chosen sport but a clear example.

The workshops then moved on to different types of match-fixing in relation to non-betting motives that might be common within the sports and how stakeholders within sport; individuals, groups or teams are manipulated to fix matches. This was on occasion a topic



where younger players did not have much experience and did require some explaining and discussion.

The impact on stakeholders; players, club, sport, as a result of match fixing, or even suspected integrity breaches, was also explained during these sessions. In the age of social media this has become particularly important and was a source of good discussion.

Examples of non-betting related match fixing in the chosen sport and their subsequent impact were given, although it was important to note that these instances did not all take part in the United Kingdom. Additionally, insight into how governing bodies in the respective sports are currently tackling match fixing and other forms of corruption was given. This included at what level this occurred, national or local organising bodies and successes.

Throughout each Workshop participants were presented with opportunities for group discussion in the following areas.

- Personal Experiences
- How to manage corruption approaches, from club perspectives.
- Are existing punishments fair?

The discussions elements were some of the most successful parts of getting the issues across to a range of participants. This did allow, in some cases, older, more experienced participants to share experiences with the younger players to aid understanding.

Summarising the presentations, information was reiterated, recommendations on how to avoid corrupt practices, for example, what to do, where to report if approached. If these were missing from clubs All of the workshops included options for connecting with the relevant authorities within their sport to report breaches of sporting ethics.

4.3 Workshop Outcome

The workshops were a very informative part of the project for both the researchers and the participants taking part. It became clear in many of the presentations that fixing for sporting related reasons had been common place and even continued to this day.

Many participants were willing to share personal stories within these presentations about their own experiences, even when they had been the ones involved in the integrity breach. Some individuals were happy regaling stories of times that situations almost got out of control from their initial, in their view, harmless activities.



Some of those who attended the presentations were shocked that these breaches of integrity could happen within their sports and at the level they played at. While honest discussions were had in the presentations about the rewards on offer and the temptation that those presented.

Somewhat concerningly, a few clubs, across all sports, declined to put members forward to attend the presentations stating that they did not have any corruption within their teams, clubs or sports. Others, as mentioned previously, declined as they felt that they were at a too low a level to be impacted by the integrity issues to be raised in the presentation. This potentially is a misunderstanding by these institutions of what this type of integrity issue is and importantly, where it can occur.

In the specific context of football in England, while those in committee and refereeing positions were somewhat aware of their responsibilities regarding integrity, players were often not. Those spoken to were unsure where to report approaches if they were made, whether this was internally at their own club or to governing bodies. They did not consider some of the examples raised within the presentation about integrity issues within the sport to be causes for concern. The football participants also often related the concept of integrity back to betting, possibly highlighting the grip that betting for financial gain has over the sport.

5 Future Outlook

As already discussed, throughout the topics of discussion and the presentations it became clear that this was an issue that had been going on for a significant period of time.

While some players and members were somewhat surprised that this could occur at their level of, often amateur, play others were all too familiar with the issues. The increasing cost of playing sport, distance and equipment, may push individuals into sport related betting instances.

Furthermore, the traditional methods of contact, often between individuals and face-to-face may change with more contact being made through social media channels away from the ground and field of play. The action plans can be adapted for this change to take into account these future issues.



5.1 Strengthening Integrity Management in England

It is very important that all sports consider how best to strengthen their integrity management systems. Those that wish to alter games are becoming more sophisticated in their operations and therefore, sports including football need to follow suit.

Firstly, continued research into the area of integrity management must also be completed by the relevant partners and authorities as a method of staying ahead of those that wish to bring this type of integrity into disrepute.

There are several steps that can be recommended in as a way of strengthening the integrity of football within the United Kingdom. In view of the findings from the United Kingdom survey, the National Action Plan should prioritise dissemination at the lower, non-professional levels of the game. This would allow regional organisations to build on the FA's current work on anti-corruption at the top level of the UK game related to betting. By distributing the action plan in this way, it could lead to a greater accessibility of the information to those involved in the game, including on related outlets, such as county FA websites. This will allow clubs and those that play the game to understand the concept of integrity and why it matters within their own context. It was clear that once engaged with the topic those in attendance at the action plan sessions were interested in the topic and willing to do more to maintain integrity within their sports. However, it remains vitally important for training to begin before problem of a lack of integrity occurs. To give it legitimacy it should be a combined effort between the researchers and local sport governing organisations.

Within football, education also has a very important role to play within the fight against a loss of integrity. This appears to be currently absent from governing body websites suggesting that players at the lower levels are not being given access to this information.

If football, and sport as a whole wish to continue its fight against these issues of integrity, then a collaborative approach among the many different stakeholders, both inside and outside of the game, needs to be developed, nurtured and revisited regularly.