

Committee: General Assembly 3 - Social, Cultural, and Humanitarian

Issue: Preventing corruption and financial crime in sports

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Introduction

In recent years, the sport industry has gone through dramatic evolution as a result of multiple challenges, opportunities, and improvements in average living standards. Although there are benefits to the increased professionalization and widened scope of the industry, there are also major disadvantages. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), “a major downside is that some of the associated risks of this evolution for sports organizations and enforcement agencies as other stakeholders have not been adequately assessed or mitigated” (Kamberska). It is very difficult for law enforcement to successfully prosecute cases involved with corruption and financial crime in sports such as match-fixing or illegal betting. This may be due to reasons such as but not limited to the growing complexity of activities around competitions, low levels of coordination, cooperation between sports governing bodies, and little to non-existent domestic legislation. Furthermore, this issue is rarely seen as a priority and thus is not properly attended to.

“The challenge is to bring together relevant stakeholders, and which possesses recognised legitimacy and expertise to develop international standards, create practical tools and deliver technical assistance to promote good governance and prevent corruption in sports.

By approaching corruption and involvement of complex international criminal activity through the prisms of both criminal justice and the interests of sport organizations, considerable expertise and know-how of a multitude of different stakeholders can be brought to bear” (Kamberska)

Definition of Key Terms

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

The UNODC is “a global leader in the fight against illicit drugs and international crime” and aims to “educate people throughout the world about the dangers of drug abuse and to strengthen

international action against illicit drug production and trafficking and drug-related crime” (Bayne). The UNODC plays a very significant role in this issue, and at the 6th session of the Conference of States to the United Nations Convention against Corruption (St. Petersburg, Russian Federation, 2 to 6 November 2015), a resolution published the following preambulatory clause:

"Recognizes the importance of protecting integrity in sport by promoting good governance in sport and mitigating the risk of corruption that sport face globally, requests the Secretariat to continue, in cooperation with relevant international organizations, partners and donors, to develop studies, training materials, guides and tools for Governments and sports organizations to enable them to further strengthen measures in this area, and acknowledges the work that has already been done by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in this regard, in particular the development of studies and guides with the International Olympic Committee and the International Centre for Sport Security" (Kamberska).

Corruption

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, corruption is “dishonest or illegal behavior especially by powerful people.”

Financial crime

Financial crimes are criminal conduct that relate to money and/or financial services and markets, which may include, though not limited to: fraud, dishonesty, misconduct in/misuse of information relating to a financial market, handling the proceeds of crime, or the financing of terrorism (FCA)

Bribery

The giving or offering of a bribe, which is money or a favor promised in hopes of influencing the judgement and/or conduct of a person with authority or in a position of trust (Merriam-Webster).

Organized crime

This can be a category of transnational, national, or local groups of businesses run by “a group of professional criminals who work together as part of a powerful and secret organization” (Merriam-Webster).

Criminalization

The act of turning a previously legal activity into a criminal offense by making it illegal.

Doping

Doping is the administration of drugs - in this case, to athletes - in order to order to inhibit and/or enhance performance.

Match-fixing

According to the Oxford dictionary, match-fixing is “the action or practice of dishonestly determining the outcome of a match before it is played.” Oftentimes, this manipulation of the game outcome is made by competitors or support staff for personal and/or financial benefit.

Spot-fixing

Similar to match-fixing, spot-fixing is “the action or practice of dishonestly determining” not the outcome of a match, but “of a specific part of a match or game before it is played” (Oxford). This activity does not influence the result of the game, although it is still considered illegal.

Wagering

Synonymous to betting, wagering is the action where each bettor pledges a certain amount to the other depending on the outcome of an unsettled matter - usually, it is in the form of risking a sum of money in hopes of earning more.

Bookmaker

Often informally referred to as a ‘bookie,’ a bookmaker is a person who or organization that takes bets, calculates odds, as well as pays out winnings (Merriam-Webster).

INTERPOL Match-fixing Task Force (IMFTF)

The IMFTF “brings together law enforcement agencies from around the world to tackle match-fixing and corruption in sports” and “supports member countries with investigations and law enforcement operations in all sports, and maintains a global network of investigators for the sharing of information, intelligence and best practices” (INTERPOL). Aside from its emphasis on investigations, the IMFTF is also closely related to INTERPOL activities which have focuses on capacity building and training to counter sport crimes. According to IMFTF, illegal gambling is “one of the most prevalent criminal activities in Asia. An example of a way in which IMFTF is attempting to solve this issue is its tactical operation codenamed Soga (short for SOccer GAMbling), which “aims to identify and dismantle the international criminal networks behind illegal soccer gambling, especially during major football tournaments such as the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup or the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) Euro Cup.

Background Information

General overview

Yury Fedotov, the chief of the UNODC, says that corruption and financial crime in sports “hampers the ability of sports to act as a force for positive change.” Corruption in sports is not exclusively pertinent to issues such as match-fixing or spot-fixing that may breach the public’s expectation of a fair match and taint the integrity of the sports industry, but also extends to the involvement of organized crime through offenses such as wagering or bookmaking. Furthermore, this issue expands to the issue of the use of narcotics and substance abuse by athletes (whether it is their own choice or not) in order to enhance performance and perhaps improve the chances of winning not only the matches themselves, but also other incidences that are involved (match-fixing, wagering, etc.)

Often, sports scandals are treated as viral controversy, meaning that such issues dissipate after a short period of wildfire and the public calms down (even if the issue is not properly sorted out). For example, the issue involving Qatar’s right to host the 2022 World Cup. This scandal was brought to light when it was said that three FIFA executives were invited and flown to a party with the Qatari federation’s private jet to Rio right before voting for the 2022 hosting rights. Furthermore, it seems as though the Qatar Aspire Academy facilities were also used to gain the votes of FIFA members. However, there was no solid evidence that pointed to the conclusion that the votes for the Qatar’s right to host the 2022 World Cup were bought. With this issue, the public as well as the sports industry lost interest very quickly after such passionate and heated debates.

Organizations such as INTERPOL and the UNODC, as mentioned before, are attempting to reduce this corruption. INTERPOL has made attempts to train players and their support staff to resist sport manipulations and temptations through programmes since 2011. The UNODC, partnered with the International Centre for Sports Security (ICSS) to implement a program similar to the aforementioned, with additional features such as protection from whistleblowing and lifting bank securities. However, these programmes are not available to every nation, making areas with limited domestic legislation on sport crimes more susceptible to these incidences. However, it is important to note that bookmakers and those in the business tend to exploit athletes’ personal relationships and/or resort to blackmailing them in order to fix a match to earn more profits (an example of this would be the kidnapping of Wasim Akram’s father by bookies in Pakistani cricket).

Another notable incident pertaining more directly to the issue of substance abuse is suspicion of the leniency given by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) given to Russian athletes. Despite urges to ban Russia’s participation at the Winter Olympics (and the claim that anything other than the ban would have worse consequences such as sending the

political message that it is tolerable for athletes to essentially ‘cheat’), both organizations were slow in dealing with this scandal.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
	<p>A series of Cricket scandals including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Manoj Prabhakar attempting to implicate Kapil Dev and others for match-fixing but was found guilty himself - Ajay Sharma found guilty for associating with bookmakers - Saleem Malik given life ban for offering bribes.
2004	33 football players in South Africa arrested on match-fixing charges, but were dropped for many of them.
2006	Kieren Fallon, a jockey, and fifteen others were arrested on race fixing charges.
2009	6 former University of Toledo athletes were indicted on charges of conspiracy to commit sport bribery in relation to their alleged involvement in a point shaving scheme.
2011	10 individuals from the University of San Diego men’s basketball team were charged of running a point shaving scheme.
2013	Delroy Facey, a football player, was arrested on suspicion of match fixing and was then sentenced to two and a half years in jail.
2015	Kirill Parfenov, an umpire, was decertified for the rest of his life for contacting other officials through Facebook in attempts to manipulate the scoring matches.
2016	Gulam Bodi was banned for 20 years by Cricket South Africa for match-fixing attempts. (The Stats Zone).

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

The following are some documents that pertain to this issue:

- Promoting Good Governance and Mitigating the Risk of Corruption (2015)
- The United Nations Convention against Corruption: A Strategy for Safeguarding against Corruption in Major Public Events, 2013

- The International Convention Against Doping in Sport (2205)
- Preventing and combating corrupt practices and transfer of funds of illicit origin and returning such funds to the countries of origin, 20 December 2002 (A/RES/51/244)

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