

# Match-Fixing

## The Cost of Integrity

Maintaining the integrity of sport and betting markets is fundamental to the business of regulated sports betting operators. Match fixing continues to plague sports and sports betting corruption continues to present a danger to consumers and the integrity of sporting events.



During the height of the pandemic a large number of sports betting corruption scandals broke in the mainstream press, most notably around so called ghost games. These 'matches' took place in a number of European countries in which gamblers were tricked into betting on games that did not happen. The opportunities for match-fixing were highlighted in less popular sports. In July 2020, The New Jersey Division of Gaming Enforcement told sportsbooks in the state to suspend betting on table tennis in the Ukraine or on any matches involving six specific Ukrainian players.

A look at INTERPOL's bi-weekly bulletin provides an insight into the scale of the problem as well as the efforts made by police forces and other government enforcement agencies to ensure the integrity of sports worldwide. Just a quick glance shows criminals tampering with the results of a myriad of sports including cricket, tennis, football and, increasingly, eSports.

In the past few months a match-fixing scheme was unearthed in the Kenya Premier League, while a player in the Ghana Premier League claimed that he scored two deliberate own goals in a match so as to foil an alleged match-fixing plot. Two Russian tennis players were given lifetime bans. A Venezuelan tennis player was banned from the sport for 14 years.

The FBI is probing match-fixing in Counter-Strike eSports in the US. The Russian national Under-19 men's handball team had to submit to lie detector tests and "psychodiagnostic evaluation" in front of a security specialist before eight of them were banned for match fixing by the country's Handball Federation. In the past year, both Wimbledon and the French Open have been marked by suspicions of match-fixing

While there are many stories in the press, it is hard to accurately gauge the size of the activity due to its clandestine nature. However, Sportradar Integrity Services, a partner to more than 100 sporting federations and leagues, has used its betting monitoring system, the Universal Fraud Detection System (UFDS), to find suspicious activity across 12 sports in more than 70 countries. We are also getting a clearer picture of the size of the problem from government bodies.

The Gambling Commission released its sports betting integrity snapshot for April 2021 - the first since licensees faced greater integrity reporting requirements. By sport, football received the most integrity reports, accounting for 44 per cent of the total. This was followed by tennis which received 21 per cent of reports, while eSports made up for a further 20 per cent. Other sports accounted for up to 15 per cent of the total reports made. In September 2019, 51 per cent of reports were from football, 30 per cent tennis, five per cent horseracing and 14 per cent from other sports.

According to Interpol's report, "The Involvement of Organised Crime Groups in Sports Corruption," sports betting involves organised crime groups operating transnationally. The report characterised these gangs as "often poly-criminal" whereby match fixing can be used "as a platform for organised crime groups to further high-scale money laundering schemes." In addition "online betting is increasingly used by organised crime groups to manipulate sports competitions."

## THE NATURE OF MATCH FIXING

Criminal groups view match fixing and betting corruption as a less risky criminal activity compared to other offences such as drug smuggling or people trafficking according to a number of law enforcement agencies. One of the most recent investigations was published by Europol in 2020.

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In common with much of the research carried out in the past, the report argues that criminals target lower tier leagues and matches largely under the radar, with football and tennis the most targeted sports by criminal networks. Tennis and individual sports were easier to manipulate, argues the report's authors, with Eurasian organised crime groups heavily involved in tennis match-fixing.

This is the latest edition to a growing library on the threat sports betting manipulation poses to the integrity of sport. Unregulated markets in Asia in particular have come under the spotlight in recent years as researchers have gone beyond Europe and looked at illegal betting patterns in other markets internationally.





One of the most insightful reports when it comes to Asian black betting markets and the manipulation of sporting events was published in "The Review of Australia's Sports Integrity Arrangements" (Wood Review) which was requested as part of the work being done by the Australian government to develop a National Sport Plan.

Published in August 2018, it pointed to unregulated or poorly regulated markets in Asia as a particular danger to sports betting integrity. Due to lack of regulation in these markets Asia was a low-risk, high-profit environment for the manipulation of sports competitions at all levels, but particularly lower levels, the authors argued.

More recently, a policy paper published jointly by the IOC, INTERPOL, and The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) highlighted the challenges posed by the Covid-19 to the integrity of sport.

The report emphasised that governments and sporting bodies should be especially vigilant due to increased hardships on athletes which could lead to criminal groups trying to exploit the situation. Indeed, athletes struggling in lower tiers and having a hard time making a living are particularly prone to manipulating results for money, especially in tennis.

A number of lawmakers have insisted that types of betting markets such as in-play betting should be banned or bets on lower tier leagues as this would discourage betting on these markets. However, research carried out by a number of organisations including the UK Gambling Commission have shown that in-play betting carries no additional risk from a match manipulation perspective.

## GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Efforts have been made by individual jurisdictions to combat match fixing while moves are afoot in a number of other countries to try and prevent it. In the UK in 2009, the Minister for Sport brought together a panel of experts to form the Sports Betting Integrity Panel.

Under its recommendations the Commission's Sports Betting Intelligence Unit (SBIU) was created to help protect Britain betting against potential corruption. From April 1, gambling licensees are required to provide the SBIU with details of betting integrity.

The French government launched a watchdog to monitor online betting in a bid to combat match-fixing back in 2016 and in March 2021 the French National Assembly unanimously adopted an article recognising the national platform to combat the manipulation of sports competitions. Germany too has taken steps to impose harsher sanctions. In 2017 the lower

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house of parliament passed a law against match fixing and betting fraud setting out prison sentences of up to three years for any player, coach or referee found guilty of match fixing. Other similar measures are being imposed in jurisdictions worldwide as the need for them becomes clearer after match fixing probes. In October, the Swedish government put forward a number of new rules to fight match fixing after The Swedish Football Association (Svensk Fotboll) revealed the outcome of a match-fixing investigation against four players.

Countries have also been working together to help combat the problem, most notably via the Macolin Convention which entered into force in September 2019. It is the only rule of international law on the manipulation of sports competitions and is implemented by the public authorities in co-operation with national and international actors.

Governments working with the industry along with ever increasing fraud detection measures have served to highlight the scale of the problem shedding light on new ways organised criminals are using to manipulate match results. As the market continues to expand and new markets open up, especially in arguably more vulnerable markets such as Africa and Latin America, the need for the close monitoring of sporting events will become increasingly important.

## INTERNATIONAL SPORTING BODIES/ AGENCIES AND THE BETTING INDUSTRY

Sports organisations are also employing a more proactive approach to combating sports betting corruption. In March 2021, FIFA, in collaboration with UNODC, launched the Global Integrity Programme – a comprehensive international programme aimed at providing all 211 member associations with enhanced knowledge and tools to fight and prevent match manipulation.

In tennis, The International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) was established in January by the governing bodies of tennis (ATP, WTA, ITF and Grand Slam Board) as a fully independent body to safeguard the integrity of professional tennis worldwide. The Esports Integrity Commission works with eSports stakeholders to protect the integrity of eSports.

Sports betting data companies and operators are also playing an increasingly significant role when it comes to monitoring and flagging up suspicious matches.

According to the Gambling Commission "Integrity Snapshot" published in April 2021, 34 per cent of betting integrity reports came from betting operators. A further 20 per cent came from sports governing bodies, while 15 per cent came from bet monitoring and data suppliers, and 10 per cent from other regulators and national platforms.

## HOW THE SPORTS BETTING INDUSTRY IS TACKLING THE PROBLEM OF MATCH FIXING

Governments working with the industry along with ever increasing fraud detection measures have served to highlight the scale of the problem shedding light on new ways organised criminals are using to manipulate match results. As the market continues to expand and new markets open up, especially in arguably more vulnerable markets such as Africa and Latin America, the need for the close monitoring of sporting events will become increasingly important.

Both the sports betting industry and sports organisations have recognised that they must continue to do all they can to protect the integrity of sports and work together to prevent match fixing. Working alongside government bodies and sporting associations, there is clear evidence that these partnerships will continue to grow. Furthermore, the sports betting industry is working in an increasingly coordinated way with governments and sporting bodies to identify potentially fixed results.

So as match-fixing evolves what is being done to protect sports from criminal elements? Which sports are most vulnerable to match fixing and why? How can the sports betting industry work with government agencies to undermine the efforts of criminals and what is the best approach to prevent match fixing in the future?



**There is no doubt that sport betting corruption presents a danger to consumers and the integrity of sporting events. But is there evidence to suggest that match fixing is getting worse? If so, what new methods are criminals coming up with to manipulate the results of matches?**

The extent of match-fixing globally, across regulated and unregulated betting, isn't fully known. Some parties have tried to estimate it but as there is little robust data for the unregulated market, in particular, there is no verifiable and secure dataset available. It is important to recognise that many poorly regulated betting operators, and those in the unregulated market, simply don't report suspicious betting and potential match-fixing. Law enforcement authorities like Europol and Interpol cite these operators as the ones most likely to be targeted and utilised by corrupters.

From IBIA's data alone, you can see that the situation is quite fluid at present, especially with the impact of the pandemic which brought an increased focus on certain sports which hadn't been the case previously. Albeit it is important to factor in that IBIA is constantly growing and so is its market coverage and any consideration of alert numbers needs to take that into account. At present, we are expecting that the 2021 alert figure will be close to the mid-point of the previous four years. In other words, we don't expect any meaningful change in the overall suspicious betting alert position for IBIA members, although the sports on which those alerts are generated may show an evolution.

The tactics employed by corrupters are constantly shifting. IBIA and its members are aware of this. Obviously, it wouldn't be prudent to start listing the types of monitoring activity IBIA and its members conduct and thereby giving corrupters the opportunity to understand our counter-corruption tactics. Suffice to say that it is a fight where IBIA members make a sizeable investment in measures to identify and punish corruption, and where that is committed long-term.

Know your customer and know your transactions are the most effective ways to monitor betting integrity. The bigger that IBIA's membership gets - which already covers the largest regulated betting market share of any transaction-based monitoring system at \$137bn of betting turnover per annum - the harder that we can make it for corrupters to bypass security measures. Those operators outside of the IBIA shield are at a sizeable disadvantage and at a far greater chance of being targeted and being the victims of fraud, along with the loss in reputation and income that goes with that.

**How big is the problem currently? How much do legal operators lose due to match fixing?**

Whilst there is no reliable value for suspicious betting and potential match-fixing covering the



**Khalid Ali,**  
Chief Executive Officer  
The International Betting Integrity Association

The International Betting Integrity Association is the leading global voice on integrity for the licensed betting industry. It is run by operators for operators, protecting its members from corruption through collective action. Its monitoring and alert platform is a highly effective anti-corruption tool that detects and reports suspicious activity on its members' betting markets.

The association has longstanding information sharing partnerships with leading sports and gambling regulators to utilise its data and prosecute corruption. It represents the sector at high-level policy discussion forums such as the IOC, UN, Council of Europe and European Commission.

IBIA represents around 85 retail and online/remote sports betting brands, including many globally recognised household names across six continents, and covering US\$137bn of global betting turnover per annum through their regulated businesses.

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global regulated and unregulated betting market. IBIA's Optimum Betting Market study does contain a reasonably reliable calculation for the cost of this fraudulent activity solely to the regulated sector.

H2 Gambling Capital conducted an examination of a detailed set of data unique to IBIA operators and a consideration of the related position within the wider regulated sector. This evidenced-based evaluation is founded on a set of robust operator market and alert data from a substantial part of the sector. That included

customer transactional data (e.g., bet size, average odds, amounts won) from those proven corrupted events, along with analysis of sporting tribunal and criminal judgments, and media reports of confirmed corruption, amongst other data.

The subsequent analysis calculated that the global regulated betting industry loses in the range of c.\$19m - \$28m per annum from match-fixing, with a reasonable mid-point being around \$25m per annum. It is important to remember that this is just the regulated sector. Losses for the unregulated sector are too difficult to quantify with any comparable assessment.

**The IBIA recently published a report: An Optimum Betting Market. Could you highlight some of its findings when it comes to the best regulatory approach when it comes to preventing match fixing?**

The Optimum Betting Market study sought to focus on three main themes: evaluate various betting frameworks globally; examine betting restrictions and the cost of match fixing; and identify best practice models for an optimum betting market.

To achieve these objectives, an independent assessment of the success of the regulatory position for betting in twenty jurisdictions across six continents and covering differing licensing models was conducted. Five key criteria - regulation, taxation, product, integrity, and advertising - were identified as the cornerstones of a successful regulatory market structure for land-based and online betting.

Each was allotted a measurable score and employed as a benchmark to assess the prevailing framework in a select number of jurisdictions globally. The integrity aspect covers issues such as the requirement to report suspicious betting activity, integrity guidance material for operators, establishment of national integrity platforms and obligation to be part of a monitoring association.

There is too much detail to cover regarding that assessment, and I'd encourage anyone interested to read the report. In short, the assessment determined ten key pillars backed-up by a robust evidence base that are most likely to generate a successful well-regulated betting framework, in other words and 'optimum betting market'.

Effective regulation, internationally competitive tax, wide product availability, integrity provisions and the availability to advertise are the cornerstones of that optimum model. Those pillars are key to achieving a high channelisation of consumers to licensed onshore operators and to maintaining the integrity of that market and related sports events on which betting takes place.



The 10 pillars of an optimum betting market:

1. Regulated betting available through land-based and online channels
2. Unlimited licences or, if limited, enough to maintain market attractiveness
3. Licensing fees to reflect regulatory costs
4. Robust but practical player protection measures
5. Internationally competitive GGR betting tax (no higher than 20 per cent)
6. No overly burdensome additional taxation
7. Wide product offering - multiple channels: fixed odds, pool, exchange and spread betting
8. Wide product offering - permitted bet types e.g., in-play: no significant restrictions
9. Betting integrity protocols
10. Balanced advertising and sponsorship parameters

**Should certain leagues or betting products be banned or does this just make the problem worse? Are there certain sports or betting products that are particularly vulnerable to match fixing?**

There is no integrity benefit from banning markets within a licensing jurisdiction, most notably because those banned markets will continue to be offered elsewhere around the globe, notably in poorly or unregulated markets. Banning certain products is actually counterproductive from that perspective, in that it serves to drive consumers away from the regulated market.

There is a general misconception about certain markets being more susceptible to corruption, which the Optimum Betting Market study dispels. The report is full of a wealth of verifiable data challenging many of the myths that have been promoted on supposed integrity protection grounds but which are more likely to simply be being used as a means to try and limit the commercial and product evolution within the private regulated betting sector, which has been driven by consumer demand for such products.

For example, there remains a general perception that some secondary betting markets are at greater risk of corruption. However, the data challenges this assertion. In football, for example, nine out of 10 (91 per cent) of all alerts in the four-year period 2017–2020 took place on primary betting markets (e.g., full time result/number of goals) compared to secondary markets (e.g., corners, yellow cards).

The operators involved in this study had c.\$11bn (€9bn) of turnover on secondary markets in

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2019, compared to an average of only five suspicious betting alerts on those markets during 2017–2020. That amounts to one suspicious alert on secondary markets for every \$2.2bn (€1.8bn) of turnover on those markets. There is a clear and significant consumer demand for those secondary markets, but a relatively negligible level of risk with IBIA members.

In-play betting is another product that is often demonised. However, the study shows that whilst almost three quarters (74 per cent) of all global football betting turnover is placed on in-play markets (\$107bn or €90bn), only 38 per cent of football alerts and potential corrupt activity is solely attributed to that type of betting. Whereas such activity can be attributed (in part or full) to 62 per cent of pre-match betting activity. In-play betting is not, in itself, a driver of integrity issues and the data shows that potentially corrupt betting activity is, in general, just as likely to have taken place pre-match as in-play in football.

It is important that the scale of corruption on well-regulated markets and operators be viewed in context. Operators who contributed to the report offered betting on over 500,000 sports matches, or 650,000 events including horse racing, per annum. Of these, 99.96 per cent had no suspicious betting alerts, meaning that there was an alert on one in every 2,700 sporting events on which betting was offered. From an individual sport perspective, 0.03 per cent of matches were flagged for potential integrity issues in football, or that 99.97 per cent on

which betting activity took place saw no potential integrity issues on IBIA monitored markets. Suspicious betting activity was identified on only 0.02 per cent of basketball matches offered for betting by IBIA members, meaning that 99.98 per cent had no integrity issues identified.

The study has the most extensive and detailed collection of market information that has ever been assembled and there is simply too much data to cover here. Those interested are encouraged to read the report, which is now available in Spanish and Portuguese, in addition to the original English version. The feedback received regarding the report and its contents have been overwhelmingly positive.

**While data supply companies are playing an increasingly crucial role when it comes to protecting the integrity of sports, do you think that there is a need for regulation of this sector so that they may operate under a set of global best practice standards?**

The provision and use of sporting event data has become an increasingly important aspect of the regulated betting market, notably driven by global consumer demand for product choice and access. The security and integrity of that data has correspondingly taken on increased significance. Following discussions with stakeholders, and in acknowledgment of a general lack of formal regulation and licensing in aspects of the data collation and supply chain, IBIA has developed and promoted a data collation process that endorses and verifies a set of minimum data standards.

IBIA believes that this is an effective means of achieving an approach which best serves to protect the integrity of sport, its data, betting markets generated by that data and consumers enjoying those products. No data approach is infallible or immune from potential corruption, but measures can and should be taken to guard against such illicit activity and effective controls can minimise the associated risks. The IBIA Data Standards is a tool designed to achieve this through a self-regulatory approach.

Major data companies Stats Perform and Sportradar have both passed the auditing process thereby receiving the Data Standards kitemark and have joined the IBIA Data Standards Steering Group, which also involves IMG Arena as an observer. The first meeting has taken place and discussions have been very positive from an integrity perspective and to delivering joint actions. Sports can also have an important impact in this area by setting clear parameters regarding the sale of their data, and a number of sports and other stakeholders have expressed an interest in engaging with the Steering Group.

**Are sporting bodies doing enough to prevent match fixing? What more can they do to eliminate sports betting corruption?**









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There are some well-resourced integrity units within sport like the ITIA in tennis and the IOC's integrity unit, which set the bar in terms of their protocols and effectiveness. This is a critical element for any sport. There is, however, a limit to the investigative actions that sports can undertake and the penalties they can impose, and IBIA would like to see more law enforcement action both nationally and internationally.

We'd also like sports to consider the probity of the betting operators they authorise their event data to be sold to. Notably, to ensure that those operators are committed, not just in perception, but in reality, to protecting the integrity of sport and to monitoring and reporting suspicious betting to the relevant authorities. It is undoubtedly the case that selling event data that facilitates betting markets to operators who are unregulated or operating from poorly regulated jurisdictions such as Curacao or the Philippines will significantly heighten the integrity risk for a sport.

**Why is it that Asia is the epicentre of modern game-fixing? Considering that many of these markets are unregulated, is there anything that can be realistically done to prevent Asian betting syndicates from tampering with the outcome of games?**

The lack of gambling regulation across much of Asia has led to a significant unregulated market evolving. That involves direct links to criminality. Europol published a report in 2020 highlighting the link between sports corruption and organised crime: the characteristics of

criminal networks, their structure and their modus operandi. In addition, the report analyses the different types of match-fixing as the most prominent form of sports corruption monitored by Europol.

That report stated that: "The Asian betting market has been the preferred choice for OCGs [organised crime groups] due to two main reasons: the high-liquidity of this market offering higher winning rewards; and the most remarkable advantage of ensuring a high degree of anonymity and consequent lack of traceability that the multi-layer 'agent system' offers. Asian bookmakers operate on a low margin/high turnover business model. Bets may be placed via the phone, via betting shops or via internet betting websites. These two factors combined make this system favourable to OCGs for carrying out their activities in this field."

The key to addressing this is to establish well-regulated betting markets in Asia with requirements on operators to monitor and report suspicious betting, as is the case across much of Europe and now North America. In some cases such as Holland, Germany and Ontario, those regulatory regimes also require operators to be part of an international integrity monitoring system such as IBIA. As the Europol report points out, well-regulated operators, as in Europe, often restrict stakes, cooperate with law enforcement investigations (e.g., disclosing personal details of suspicious betting activities) and may ban customers from betting in suspicious cases or even temporarily freeze suspicious clients' accounts as a means of deterring corruption and maintaining the integrity of markets.

**Isn't there a danger that by flagging up a potential fixed match or in-game event that someone's career might be ruined? What steps can be taken to prevent this from happening? Is there a risk that mistakes may be made and integrity services might act overzealously?**

Fundamentally, this is the domain of sports and law enforcement. IBIA and its members identify and pass on suspicious betting data which we hope will lead to sanctions being placed on those proven to be involved in corruption. Under the terms of our information sharing MoU we only disclose information to the relevant investigatory body such as a sporting integrity unit and we won't make anything public. The association has no role in how that might then be communicated publicly, either by a sport or public authority.

IBIA is also not an investigatory body, nor does it have any enforcement powers with regard to sporting participants. All we ask is that sports and public authorities, such as gambling regulators and law enforcement, thoroughly investigate the suspicious betting information we provide to them and, where corruption is proven, impose robust sanctions. That process, where executed effectively, is a major deterrent to further corruption taking place.







**Andy Cunningham,**  
Director Global Partnerships, Integrity Services  
Sportradar

Sportradar Integrity Services is a leading supplier of monitoring, intelligence, education, and consultancy solutions for sports organisations, state authorities, and law enforcement agencies to support them in the fight against match-fixing and corruption. Trusted and relied on by more than 100 sports' governing bodies and leagues around the world and staffed with executives who have implemented integrity policies for the world's largest sports bodies and leagues, it is firmly established as a market leader in the field of sporting integrity.

"In an ideal world, match-fixing and betting related corruption would be eliminated from all sports, but the reality is - and what we've seen for many years now - is that there are always going to be people searching for new ways to profit from this illegal activity. At Sportradar we continue to play our part in the fight against this cancer and are continuing to invest in evolving our technology to give the maximum chance of detecting attempts to corrupt sport."

**Andy Cunningham**

**Andy, what new methods and schemes are criminals coming up with to manipulate the results of matches?**

The Covid-19 pandemic led to match-fixers looking for new competitions to target when the vast majority of established sport ground to a halt, and the financial hardships brought about by Covid-19 has made sport more susceptible to corruption. In the past 20 months, we have seen first-hand how criminals are targeting all levels of sport, including competitions that were previously known to be low risk. We are witnessing a new wave of more direct digital approaches to players and athletes. For instance,

our Intelligence & Investigation team have helped sports governing bodies investigate several cases of individuals approaching athletes on social media, trying to engage them in match-fixing activity. This has been a growing trend over recent years.

The ease of access to athletes is greater than it has ever been and these platforms are breaking down the barriers previously in place between athletes and fans, but also unfortunately, those with corrupt intentions. Thankfully, many of these approaches are reported by athletes to the governing bodies, but this is not a 'catch all' situation, so sporting authorities must continue to address this topic in education and awareness raising with athletes.

**What can be done to prevent match fixing? How do you keep up with these new methods and flag up suspicious activities?**

In an ideal world, match-fixing and betting related corruption would be eliminated from all sports, but the reality is - and what we've seen for many years now - is that there are always going to be people searching for new ways to profit from this illegal activity. At Sportradar we continue to play our part in the fight against this cancer and are continuing to invest in evolving our technology to give the maximum chance of detecting attempts to corrupt sport. This includes further utilising Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning technology to sift through and analyse billions of data sets from global betting markets. Our Universal Fraud Detection System (UFDS) has detected over 1,200 suspicious matches in the past 20 months, with over 750 to-date in 2021.

Our approach to tackling some of the newer threats that are happening on social media and online includes utilising open-source intelligence investigations to assist investigating authorities to uncover those behind the online accounts who approach and corrupt athletes, tracing them to real world identities. We can then make a series of recommendations to the organisers based on the information we uncover and support them to pursue a course of action.

**Could you tell us more about Sportradar's Universal Fraud Detection System (UFDS) and how it works?**

The UFDS is the core bet monitoring system that has detected match-fixing for over 15 years and been verified by the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) as 'reliable evidence.' It is our conviction that the UFDS should be universally available for all, irrespective of resources available. This is why, as of October 2021, the UFDS service is offered free of charge to ALL of sport.

The UFDS is today used by more than 100 sporting body partners globally from over 25 different sports.



Our UFDS tracks betting patterns from global betting markets, which are monitored in real-time. Using a combination of machine learning and algorithms alongside our team of expert integrity analysts, we search for irregularities in the betting markets that might indicate corruption. If, for example, we see a sudden shift in the lines for a match that cannot be reasonably explained, that is something we will look into further to determine whether or not there is a suspicion the match has been targeted for betting manipulation. Once we determine that a match is indeed suspicious, we will escalate it to our sports league and federation partners.

**Regulators in some jurisdictions are looking to restrict betting on certain events in game in the belief that it will help undermine the efforts of corrupt elements in sports. Is this the right approach do you think?**

Restricting betting opportunities in regulated frameworks runs the risk of driving consumers to place their bets or force them to wager with unregulated offshore sportsbooks that satisfy their betting needs.

Bringing as much betting as possible into the regulated frameworks and the protections and integrity monitoring technology this brings ultimately increases the chances of detecting attempts to fix sport.

With intelligence that spots anomalies in the blink of an eye, technology plays a crucial role in protecting both consumers and athletes from match-fixing and betting-related corruption.

**Could AI play a greater role in preventing match manipulation in the future?**

Sportradar continuously invests in the development of the UFDS through tailored product iterations, new features and markets for each monitored sport. This includes utilising Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning technology to sift through and analyse billions of data sets from global betting markets

To that end, Sportradar has dedicated data scientists who have developed and maintained a machine-learning algorithms to support automated detection of suspicious odds movements across the industry. Additionally, to ensure data-driven decision making, Sportradar uses a data analytics platform to help identify and map match-fixing trends worldwide.

**Do you think match fixing is becoming more prevalent, or is the industry just getting better at detecting it?**

Based on analysis from our UFDS, there has been a steady evolution in match-fixing over the years. Those who are fixing matches are diversifying the types of sports and competitions they choose to target. They're also changing the way they initiate contact with

"There has been a steady evolution in match-fixing over the years. Those who are fixing matches are diversifying the types of sports and competitions they choose to target. They're also changing the way they initiate contact with athletes, for example, in the digital realm. Because of the growth in match-fixing techniques and the increased level of sophistication deployed by match-fixers, we offer our UFDS for free to sports organisations and leagues to help tackle the issue."

**Andy Cunningham**

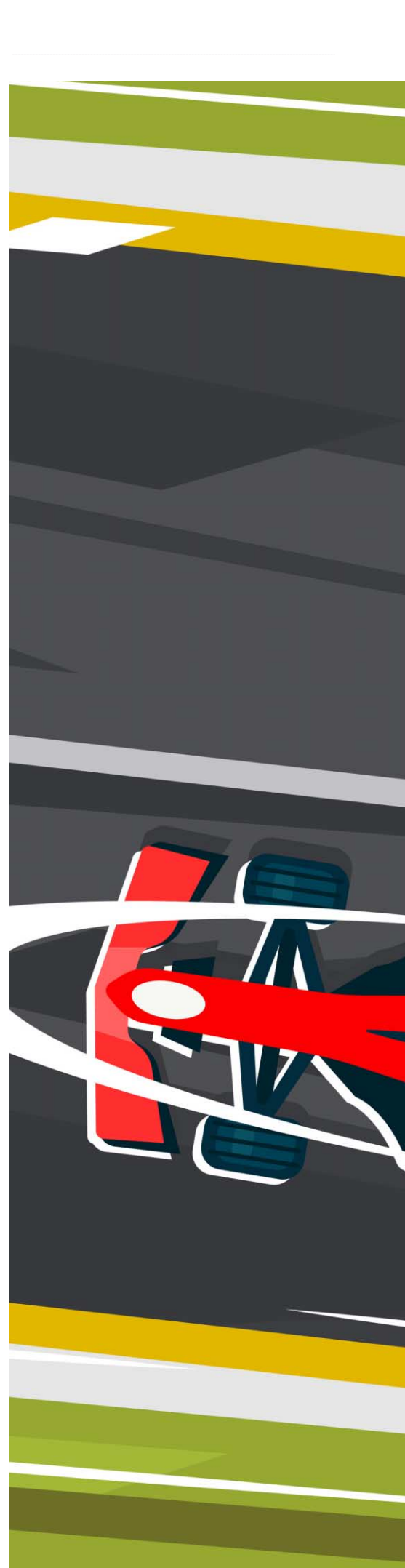
athletes, for example, in the digital realm. Because of the growth in match-fixing techniques and the increased level of sophistication deployed by match-fixers, we decided to offer our UFDS for free to sports organisations and leagues around the globe to help tackle the issue. Sportradar has a strong commitment to supporting the sustainability of global sports and using data and technology for good.

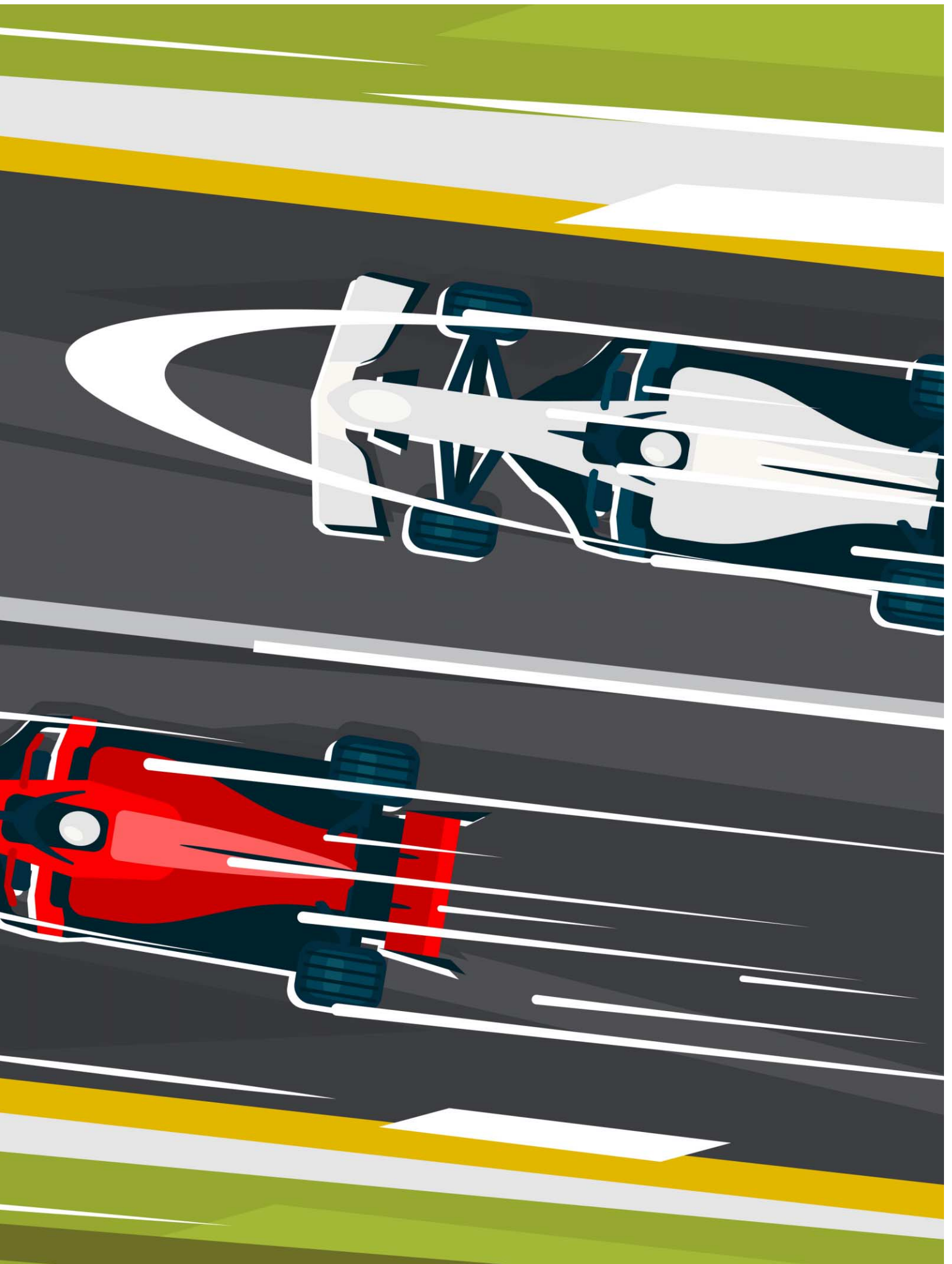
Esports is one area that has been a key target for fixers in recent years, which has led to a rapid increase in the number of suspicious matches reported. Over 70 suspicious matches have been detected by the UFDS since April last year, with more than 40 of those suspicious matches identified since January this year.

**Are there any countries or particular sports which you see as high risk when it comes to match fixing?**

In addition to the suspicious soccer and esports matches detected this year, Sportradar's UFDS has detected suspicious activity in tennis: 45 matches; basketball: 26; table tennis: 11; ice hockey: 10; cricket: 6, while suspicious activity has also been identified in volleyball, handball, and beach volleyball.

On a global level, the UFDS has detected 475 suspicious matches in Europe so far this year, with Latin America recording 143 suspicious matches in the same period. That's followed by the Asia Pacific region with 94, Africa with 46, 12 in the Middle East and nine in North America since the start of January 2021.





Match-fixing is almost as old as the sport itself, and at first, it used to be a tool to essentially secure victory or better results for the desired team by bribing referees or even the rival. But, as sports betting became widespread and more popular, the focus shifted from this primary goal to a completely different one: to secure financial benefit by betting on the in-advanced secured outcome of the match. Now, match-fixing goes from individual doings all the way to the well-organised betting syndicates.

In the past 15 years, and especially after the emergence of live betting, the number of sports events available through bookmakers has significantly increased. It has also led to an increase in the number of amateur and semi-professional sports events available for betting. The participants and referees of such events often are punters placing bets on their own matches. A variety of markets then enables them to fix the particular outcomes that will not affect the match's final result.

This is a daily struggle for bookmakers worldwide, and the bookmakers are often the first to detect such behaviour.

#### **Is match fixing more prevalent in some sports and not others?**

Yes, one could argue that it is easier to fix the match in some sports, but I believe that the greater risk of match-fixing is related to the professional level of the sports event and the region from which the event is coming. It is much easier to temper the outcome of the matches in individual sports, such as tennis or table tennis, simply because it is enough to approach one participant.

Lower-ranking ITF tournaments with modest prize funds are notorious in this regard, and we have witnessed that dozens of tennis players were banned from playing tennis due to match-fixing. The second problem is the corruption of umpires in charge of entering results into the official database, which feed providers use for odds compiling. Delay in this process opens a possibility for late bets in live betting.

In team sports, the most apparent example is in football. Besides fixed bets on the outcome of the match, for corrupted referees and defenders it is fairly easy to fix the bets on bookings, corner kicks or penalty kicks.

Unfortunately, it is not rare that even the management of the team is involved in scams in lower leagues.

#### **Are there certain jurisdictions where sports betting corruption is more prevalent than others?**

Yes, absolutely! Countries where corruption is rooted in society are usually the ones where the



**Robert Matijevic**  
Managing Director, Seven Sportsbook  
NSoft

NSoft is an internationally recognised software and hardware solutions supplier for the betting and igaming industry. Its portfolio includes omnichannel, turnkey betting solutions for the operators with powerful sportsbook software, a wide range of draw-based games, a palette of virtual sports, lotteries, SSBTs and casino games. NSoft's services encompass a fully modular iGaming Platform, which with 110+ clients in over 40 countries.

"Countries, where corruption is rooted in society, are usually the ones where the problem with match-fixing is more acute. In addition, the inefficient judiciary that is not dealing with more serious criminal activities or state-level corruption doesn't represent any threat to the participants in match-fixing and bet-fixing."

**Robert Matijevic**

problem with match-fixing is more acute. As opposed to more developed countries, such jurisdictions don't have dedicated institutions to deal with sports integrity. In addition, the inefficient judiciary that is not dealing with more serious criminal activities or state-level corruption doesn't represent any threat to the participants in match-fixing and bet-fixing.

The most significant portion of fixed matches comes from the Balkans, East Europe and CIS countries.

#### **How important is cooperation between sports betting operators, data suppliers and sports organisations in the fight against match fixing?**

All participants in the process have to cooperate in fighting this problem with success. Betting operators are at the source of the problem, and they are the first to identify the anomaly. It is often a common-sense question to tell that something is off and might be a possible fix.

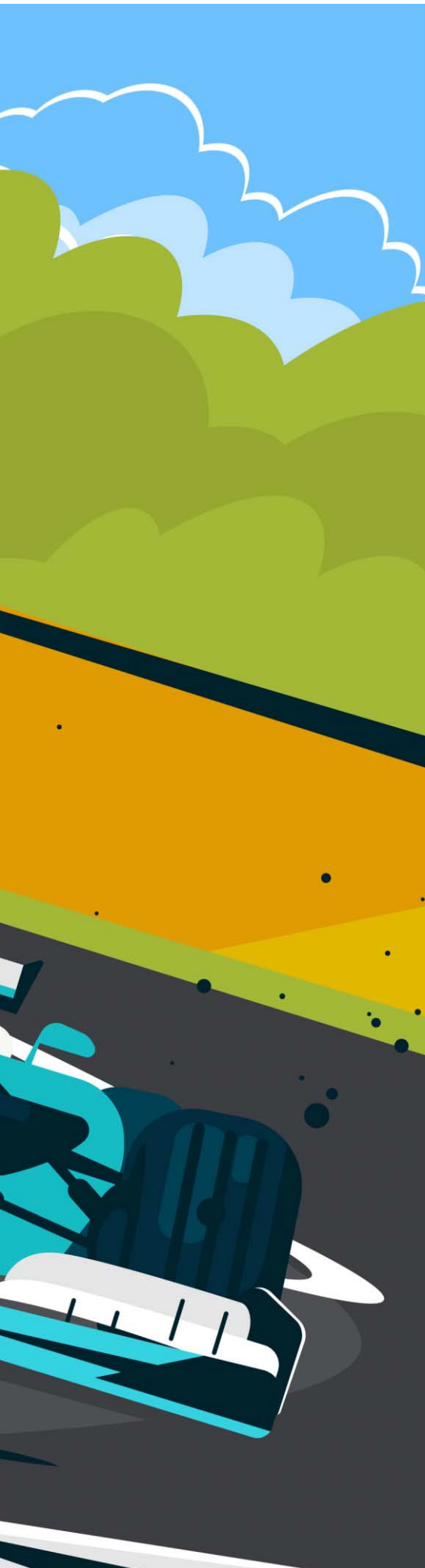












"In some jurisdictions, a withdrawal of amateur matches or certain market types is already happening. This action decreases the possibility of betting on fixed matches and has a clear benefit from the sports integrity perspective. From the financial aspect, I believe that this is a far greater blemish than it is a cure for the betting operators."

**Robert Matijevic**

A significant number of betting operators are in The International Betting Integrity Association (IBIA). The association plays a vital role in investigating, prosecuting, and sanctioning parties involved in match-fixing.

Feed providers are also very active in solving the problem of match-fixing. As a part of the NSoft Sportsbook solution, in cooperation with Sportadar, we offer Sportsbook Managed Trading Service that also includes successful cooperation with the Sportradar Integrity Service. This branch within Sportradar is a supplier of sports integrity solutions for sports governing bodies, anti-doping organisations, clubs and state authorities.

A notorious match-fixing case in the American NCAA league by two basketball players from Arizona State University is a perfect example of match-fixing detection, investigation and an epilogue in a form of court trial. The scandal from the year 1994 was recently described in Netflix's Bad Sport series.

Arizona's point guard, Stevin Smith, an NBA prospect, was the main protagonist of the scandal. Having trouble with debts and gambling issues, Smith set up a point shaving fix with the help of his bookmaker. The scam was soon discovered by the proactive Las Vegas bookmakers, and reported to the FBI. The investigation ended with trial and jail sentence.

Point shaving is a type of match-fixing where the participants try to change the game's final score without changing who wins. Players usually do this to prevent a team from covering a published point spread, and this is a very common type of basketball match-fixing.

**Last year, NSoft and Sportradar extended their existing partnership, with an additional agreement signed to help raise global product**

**awareness of the NSoft-developed Vision software. Could you briefly tell us about NSoft's AI-powered Vision software? Could this software be used to help protect sports betting integrity?**

Vision is NSoft's AI-powered video management system that harvests the data collected by security cameras in order to improve various aspects of a land-based business - from business analytics to security issues. It opens a possibility to reduce pay-ins on fixed matches.

It is much easier for bookies to detect and limit registered punters or betting syndicates online. Anonymous betting at a bet shop operator or SSBT is suitable for match-fixing scams in land-based businesses. Vision module within Seven Sportsbook software opens a possibility to link tickets made from potentially fixed matches with anonymous punters. Such punters then can be flagged within the system as a potential risk and trigger an alert if seen in bet shops or using self-service betting terminals.

By following the patterns of punters' behaviour and betting preferences, AI will surely play a more significant role in detecting and preventing betting on fixed matches.

**What is the best approach to prevent match fixing? Is it harsher sanctions on players? Would the banning of certain bets such as certain in-play markets or banning betting on matches in lower leagues work to prevent match fixing?**

More severe sanctions for all involved in the scam would surely decrease the number of match-fixing. Still, sometimes it is not easy to collect the evidence, and some countries don't even have a clear regulatory framework to deal with and sanction such activities.

In some jurisdictions, a withdrawal of amateur matches or certain market types is already happening. This action decreases the possibility of betting on fixed matches and has a clear benefit from the sports integrity perspective. From the financial aspect, I believe that this is a far greater blemish than it is a cure for the betting operators. It directly affects their competitiveness when everybody is under pressure to offer the best live betting with as many markets as possible.

As of sportsbook software providers, investment in risk management and AI prediction models could significantly prevent damage caused by match-fixing. A globally, centralised database on players, teams, referees, match-fixing shared among sportsbook providers, betting operators and sports associations, together with punters black book shared among operators would make it easier on everybody.

And for the bookies, it's just another day in the office anyway.







**Oliver Lamb**  
SVP Product Compliance  
Kambi

Kambi is an independent provider of sports betting technology and services to the regulated global betting and gaming industry. The trusted partner to more than 25 operators on six continents, Kambi not only provides a first-class sports betting experience, but acts as an incubator for operator innovation and differentiation thanks to a data-driven sportsbook core and flexible technology.

"The sports betting industry's foundations are built in the trust that consumers need to have in the integrity of sporting events, and those competing, if they are to place a wager on them. Any breakdown in trust would have huge implications for the long-term sustainability of the sports betting industry and protecting sports from manipulation is therefore of paramount importance."

**Oliver Lamb**

**Oliver, how is match-fixing evolving? Are you seeing any new trends emerging over match manipulation in certain sports?**

While in my role as Kambi's SVP Product Compliance, I can say that there haven't been many great step-changes in recent times, the main aspect I would highlight is the shift that came at the beginning of the pandemic. The sporting events that fixers tend to target were disrupted, but you could see that they quickly regrouped and focused their attention on sports such as table tennis.

I don't think the industry or organisations such as the International Betting Integrity Association (IBIA), of which Kambi is an associate member, were surprised by this at all – we had controls and sophisticated monitoring in place to detect and protect against this. When we look at integrity numbers and flagged events, these remain fairly stable, but that shift to more niche sports is what I would point to.

**Could you tell us more about the process of identifying a potentially fixed match? Let's say you spot something suspicious... what happens next?**

The sports betting industry's foundations are built in the trust that consumers need to have in the integrity of sporting events, and those competing, if they are to place a wager on them. Any breakdown in trust would have huge implications for the long-term sustainability of the sports betting industry and protecting sports from manipulation is therefore of paramount importance.

Kambi trades over 300,000 events a year, and the first step is to ensure every member of our trading and risk management teams are trained and know what to spot in terms of betting and the market movements. We invest a lot of time and effort in ensuring that those eyes and ears are tuned in to spot the signs of corrupt betting practices.

Once something has been spotted it is passed on to our sportsbook control team immediately, and that's when the investigation kicks in. Kambi's sportsbook control team is a 24/7 operation and always ready to catch this kind of information whether it comes from our trading team, or one of our integrity partners such as the IBIA.

The team then looks through the betting patterns, how the odds compare to the rest of the market and all the prior information we have on the accounts which made the bets, to establish as full a picture as possible as to whether the activity constitutes suspicious betting. If those wagers are confirmed as suspicious, that's when we proceed to contact our integrity partners, which would include our operator partners, organisations like the IBIA and the Esports Integrity Coalition, and regulators in jurisdictions where we hold licences.

**How does Kambi work with regulators and other organisations such as sports bodies to protect the integrity of sports and prevent match fixing?**

One thing we're always happy to do is share best practice and show regulators and sports governing bodies what's 'under the hood' when it comes to Kambi's integrity and compliance functions. It's important for regulators to trust Kambi and that they have confidence in our integrity procedures and controls.

To expand on this, we've worked with bodies including the European Council and North American Gaming Regulators Association and numerous governing bodies to talk them through how we work, our place in the integrity ecosystem, and how we can support their efforts towards having the most coordinated approach possible.



**Overall is the sports betting industry getting better at spotting and flagging up irregular betting patterns?**

I would say this is definitely the case. Kambi has long invested in this area and we have been very strong on integrity since the company was founded, but you can see that the water level as a whole is rising. This is in part due to the increased exposure that integrity issues are getting, but it is also largely down to the spread of regulation. If we take the new regulations in the Netherlands and Germany as examples, these frameworks have integrity monitoring and sporting protection baked into the regulations. As a result, ever more operators are responding and putting sophisticated and coherent approaches in place to do their part for the protection of global sporting integrity.

**Do any jurisdictions in particular offer any unique challenges to sports betting integrity and how does Kambi address these challenges?**

Challenge isn't the word I'd use – growing burdens in this area should be welcomed by operators and championed by regulators. With a singular focus on regulated markets, Kambi plays a key role in the detection of sports manipulation worldwide, and we knew that anchoring our business in the values of integrity and compliance from day one would be a cornerstone in our ongoing commercial success.

We are active in approximately 40 regulated jurisdictions, working with a number of multi-jurisdictional operators. If there is a particular challenge there, I would say it's making sure that we and our operators are fully across which regulator needs to know what information in the event of suspicious betting activity. Ensuring we meet those obligations efficiently is vital.

**What can be done to prevent match fixing? Are harsher sanctions on athletes the way forward? Or are educational programmes aimed at younger athletes coming through the ranks a more effective tool?**

While as a B2B provider this is not an area in which Kambi is directly involved, we welcome educational programmes that training organisations and operators support. By way of example, our partner Kindred Group works closely with Swedish football to provide integrity education to all participants.

What I would say is that athletes are the end point of this corruption, and potentially in some cases they are being manipulated like the betting markets themselves. The core problem from the perspective of prevention are the match fixers and the organisers – you will never be able to fully prevent it unless you go after the instigators of the problem, with the investment and international coordination that requires.

**Are there any sports or betting markets which are particularly prone to match manipulation?**

"You can see that the water level as a whole is rising. This is in part due to the increased exposure that integrity issues are getting, but it is also down to the spread of regulation. In the Netherlands and Germany, these frameworks have integrity monitoring and sporting protection baked into the regulations. As a result, ever more operators are responding and putting sophisticated and coherent approaches in place to do their part for the protection of global sporting integrity."

**Oliver Lamb**

Lower level tennis remains one of the major sports affected by integrity issues, and table tennis grew as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

There is talk around esports, and we do see occasional issues. However, considering it is a fairly new part of the sports betting ecosystem, there is a lot of good work being done by the likes of the Esports Integrity Coalition, who are active as the bridge between the industry and events organisers and helping to build out that mutual understanding.

In terms of the betting markets themselves, it doesn't change too much. There is less large scale fixing at an event level than there once was, such as 1919 Black Sox Scandal, which relates to an attempt to fix the MLB World Series. Now it is more focused on fixing single points or occurrences, but this is where integrity organisations and suppliers such as Kambi invest a great deal in tracking those markets, controlling risk and ensuring the right measures are in place to protect against manipulation.

**Are you able to help inform policy in certain jurisdictions when it comes to sports betting integrity issues. In the US, for example, are you advising regulators in certain states?**

We are always actively involved in conversations with regulators in every jurisdiction in which we operate. Having genuine, two-way conversation and collaboration between regulators and the operators and suppliers is key to ensuring best practice when it comes to protecting sporting integrity.

