



According to freelance journalist Declan Hill, there are two types of fixed matches: the arranged ones, where the team's officers are the corrupters; and the gambling ones that need only one of the players to be fixed.

The myths and realities of MATCH FIXING

A study of 137 fixed football matches shows that matches are not fixed the way you think

by Pablo Vignone, journalist, Página 12, Argentina

Declan Hill, a freelance journalist and Ph.D student at Oxford University, has scrutinized 137 fixed football matches from around the world because he wants to know how the fixing is done. The findings are astonishing to say the least.

Declan Hill's acting skills are just as strong as what he has to say. Maybe it is related to the nature of his words, as he talks about corruption in sport in a way that completely surprises the audience because of the full weight of his revelations.

After studying 137 football matches from Europe, Asia and even in Brazil, he found that there are many clichés about match fixing that are not true. You may think that a referee who is going to cheat will eventually sanction a penalty kick. You are wrong. Only in 40 per cent of those matches there are fixed penalties.

As Hill says, fixed games are not often played in the way people may think. It is only the badly fixed games that have aroused the suspicions of fans. There are many examples of that.

"Look at the goalkeepers. When they are cheating, they place themselves in a slightly wrong

position in the goal line, and sometimes they push the ball instead of securing it against their bodies," says Hill.

Most people may think the goalkeeper made a mistake. But again, it is not the truth.

Midfielders most willing

"Midfielders are the most willing players to cheat, because they can control the game from the middle of the pitch, carrying the ball for long enough to give the rivals the chance to seize it, or shooting to the goalkeeper without too much danger."

When West Germany and Austria played 1-1 in the 1982 World Cup, many people thought it was an arranged match. In fact, it was: Hill included it in his study.

"As you may recall, the goals were scored at the beginning of the match. That is what normally happens in a fixed match; not penalties in the last minutes as you may suspect."

Surreal stories

Hill had some surreal stories to tell.

"Once in Bangkok I was talking with a mob guy. He had many cell phones. There was a German

Bundes Liga match that was going to start, and he gambled 20,000 US dollars on it. He then told me the score the match would have. Each time a goal was scored, the cell phone rang. Eventually, the score was the one he predicted."

Are you surprised? There is more: "In a second league football match in Belgium, Denmark or any tiny country in Europe you may see two or three hundred fans in the grandstands and some Chinese people in a corner, talking on their cellphones relaying every detail of the match directly to Shanghai."

According to Hill, there are two types of fixed matches: the arranged ones, where the team's officers are the corrupters, and the gambling ones where only one of the players does the fixing.

"Once I talked with a famous football player about cheating," Hill says. "He asked me how to contact the bad people. But why, I asked. 'Because you can make a lot of money with them' he answered me".

It is the last revelation: "The people you would not suspect are often the people behind the fix."