

## Play the Game 2007 Conference Magazine

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# SPEAK UP for the love of sport

## It is high time to found a new global institution to fight corruption in sport

by Jens Sejer Andersen

In March 2008, when the largest corruption scandal ever in the world of sport was disclosed in a Swiss courtroom, the reaction from the sports and media communities was remarkable.

The court stated that from 1989-2001 the now bankrupt sports marketing company ISL handed out 138 million Swiss francs – 87.5 million euros – in bribes to sports leaders in return for acquiring television and marketing rights.

You would think that this information should make headlines worldwide, but very few news media bothered to publish it.

You would also think that the sports organisations that once were the customers of ISL – the global football, tennis, athletics, swimming, basketball, and Olympic organisations – would immediately try to hunt down those of their leaders who had filled their own pockets with fortunes belonging to sport.

But no.

The omerta – the law of silence – is widespread in world sport when facing unpleasant news.

As you will see in this magazine, speakers and participants at the fifth Play the Game conference would be sentenced to several years in prison if the law of silence was enforced in real life.

They speak up about issues that are often neglected in the public domain. Critical issues like corruption, trafficking or doping, and positive issues like the value of sport in the development of children, grown-ups and of our communities.

They do so out of love for sport and what it can bring of joy, health and education. And they do believe that the best remedy against the illnesses of sport is an open and transparent public debate.

In the years since Play the Game made its first gathering of journalists, researchers and sports leaders in 1997, the sports debate has progressed on some fronts; on others it has not.

On the doping front, the foundation of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) has brought about new standards for transparency and open public debate in the fight against drugs in sport.

The same advance cannot be noted in the combat of the other big threat to the values of sport: corruption.

On the contrary, corruption seems to be growing in its many forms: match fixing, trafficking, money laundering, secret commissions and outright bribery to name a few.

It is high time to get inspired by WADA and found a new world institution to fight corruption in sport.

The institution should be run by different interests: the International Olympic Committee and the international sport federations, by the United Nations, by governments, and by intergovernmental organisations like the European Union.

And it should also invite representatives of the media, the fan trusts and the sports business world on board.

1. define minimum standards for transparency, accountability and democratic procedures in sport
2. monitor that the minimum standards are respected
3. actively welcome sports officials and other stakeholders to report irregularities
4. have a mandate to investigate cases of mismanagement and corruption, including the right to search sports offices, archives etc. without prior notice
5. be equipped with right to issue bans against individuals or groups and suspend those who are under investigation
6. be enabled to report supposed violations to national or international legal authorities
7. regularly communicate its findings to the public

Sport cannot solve the immense challenges it is facing by turning its back to society.

This is fully understood in Iceland, a country marked by 1,000 years of democratic tradition, a strong corruption-free culture and a social and humanistic approach to sport.

Play the Game thanks our co-hosts at UMFI and all Icelanders for the inspiration they gave us. Through this magazine we hope to pass this inspiration on to anyone in the rest of the world who speaks up for a better sporting life.



*"I hope it will (...) make people more optimistic about how sport can play a constructive role in society in every part of the world".*

Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, President of Iceland.