The extent of match fixing in German soccer

Results of an online survey with honest answers to embarrassing questions

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Match Fixing as a subject of scientific research

- Declan Hill (2008): Partly social scientific but mostly journalistic attempt
- Economic analysis of law: Highly abstract analyses of economic determinants and effects of corruption
- Social sciences?
Problem: Description of the subject “match fixing”

1. At which rate does match fixing occur in (grassroot) soccer in Germany?
2. At which rate are soccer players involved in match fixing?
3. At which rate are trainers and coaches involved in match fixing?
4. At which rate are referees involved in match fixing?
Methode: Randomized Response Technique

Question:
Were you ever personally involved in match fixing?

π
match fixer

1-π (β)
Honest player

p: answer „yes“
yes

1-p: answer honestly
yes

p: answer „yes“
yes

1-p: answer honestly
no
Experience the Randomized Response Technique

1. **For scientists:** Have you ever cited an article or a book without having read the article or the book thoroughly?

2. **For politicians:** Have you ever made an election promise which you knew you wouldn’t make true?

3. **For journalists:** Have you ever misquoted somebody in an article?

If you were born in April, May or July, please answer “yes” no matter if you have ever behaved in that way.
If you were born in a different month please answer honestly.
The sample

Sampling strategies:
– First attempt: With support from the DFB – failed.
– Second attempt: With support from organizers of internet forums and newsgroups – failed.
– Third attempt: By an E-Mail pyramid system – succeeded only by using a large number of „seed persons“

Resulting sample: 277 records,
– 19.1 % female (over-representation) from different German leagues.
– 70.6 % played soccer in 2010/2011 season.
– 91.7 % played soccer for more than one season
The sample

Mean age: 26.0 years old, SD 6.5

Distribution by age categories (played in 10/11)

- Youth/Junior level: 7.2%
- Senior level: 78.5%
- Veteran level: 11.8%

Distribution by performance/leagues (played in 10/11)

- Subdistrict level: 48.2%
- District level: 29.2%
- County level: 13.8%
- Sub-national level: 4.6%
- National/higher level: 1.5%
The questions

Match fixing means …

– … to request single or multiple players to act unsportsmanlike insofar as a preliminarily fixed result (e.g. defeat) will occur.
– The request is connected with benefits (e.g. invitations, one or more cases of beer, money, sport equipment) for those players who comply with the request.

1. Have you ever experienced …?
2. Have you ever been personally involved …?
3. Did you experience … in the 2010/2011 season?
4. Were you personally involved … in the 2010/2011 season?
Results

Have you ever experienced …?

Did you experience … in the 2010/2011 season?

honest 'yes'

- 22.7%
- 14.8%
Have you ever experienced …?

Did you experience … in the 2010/2011 season?

- Cheaters
- Honest 'yes'

- 0
- 22.7
- 14.8
- 44.2
Have you ever experienced …?

- Did you experience … in the 2010/2011 season?
  - honest 'no': 77.3%
  - honest 'yes': 0%
  - cheaters: 22.7%

Did you experience … in the 2010/2011 season?

- 41
- 44.2
- 14.8

Match Fixing in German soccer
Results

Were you ever involved …?

- Honest 'no': 47.6%
- Cheaters: 37.6%
- Honest 'yes': 14.8%

Were you involved … in the 2010/2011 season?

- Honest 'no': 80.1%
- Cheaters: 18.5%
- Honest 'yes': 1.4%
Implications

• Match fixing isn’t only a top league-phenomenon in German soccer.

• A considerable number of players in Germany is involved in match fixing.

This doesn’t restrain people from playing soccer!

• Match fixing in German soccer doesn’t always mean wilful deceit or unjust enrichment in legal terms.

• The currency in match fixing is not always € or US$ but it is often „a case of beer“. 
Questions worth discussing

• Can we implement measures against match fixing and corruption without threatening grassroot sports?
• Who will profit from the fight against match fixing and corruption?
References