WANTED! Dead or Alive! Reward for injury: USA NFL Bounty Scheme - a form of Match-fixing?

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Overview

✓ The Problem of Match-fixing
  • Defining Match-fixing
    – US NFL Bounty Scheme
  • Benefits & Conclusions
Current Situation

• No universal definition of match-fixing
  - Many variations at national, European and international levels, sports organizations/federations

• Do we need to define match-fixing?
  - Maybe not?

• Urgency to define it has died

• What is match-fixing? (Manipulation of sports results)
  • Also, there is no universal definition of corruption
    - National codes and laws all address corruption or fraud; not all address match-fixing.
Sports Corruption Typology

*Sports Corruption Methods

Legal/Illlegal

Gambling/Betting

Drugs (Doping)

Match-fixing

Money Laundering

Bribery

Actors

Individuals

Actors Indiv/Group/Org

Specific to Sports

Not Specific to Sports

Actors Indiv/Group/Org

Not Specific to Sports

Actors Indiv/Group/Org

Not Specific to Sports

Actors Indiv/Group/Org

Not Specific to Sports

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Definitions: Council of Europe (2011)

'The expression “manipulation of sports results” covers the arrangement of an irregular alteration of the course or the result of a sporting competition or any of its particular events (such as matches, races) in order to obtain an advantage for oneself or for others and to remove all or part of the uncertainty normally associated with the results of a competition.'
Definition: Australian Sports Minister

“Match-fixing involves the manipulation of the outcome or contingency by competitors, teams, sports agencies, support staff, referees, and officials, and venue staff. Such conduct includes:

a. The deliberate fixing of the results of a contest, or of an occurrence within the contest, or of a points spread;
b. Deliberate underperformance;
c. Withdrawal (tanking);
d. An official’s deliberate misapplication of the rules of a contest;
e. Interference of the play or playing surfaces by venue staff; and
f. Abuse of insider information to support a bet placed by any of the above or placed by a gambler who has recruited such people to manipulate an outcome or contingency.”

“Match-fixing is defined as manipulation of a sporting competition where the actors involved (athletes, trainers, managers, referees, etc.) seek to manipulate the outcome of the competition or a single aspect of the competition for financial gain for themselves or others.”

“The manipulation of sports results covers the arrangement on an irregular alteration of the course or the result of a sporting competition or any of its particular events (e.g. matches, races...) in order to obtain financial advantage, for oneself or for others, and remove all or part of the uncertainty normally associated with the results of a competition.”
Key Characteristics

• Manipulation
• Within the context of a sporting competition
• Irregular alteration of the course of the result
• To obtain financial advantage
• Removing all or part of the uncertainty normally associated with the results of the competition
NFL Bounty Scheme a/k/a Bounty-gate

- NFL Investigation concluded in 2012
- New Orleans Saints – Head coach paying players “bonuses” as an incentive to cause serious injury to key opposing players (on the field)
- Is this a form of match-fixing?
Characteristics of Match-fixing

- **Manipulation**
  - Can over performance or extra-ordinary measures constitute manipulation for purposes of match-fixing?
  - Does the difference in “intent” (to cause injury vs. rules of the game) rise to the level of manipulation?

- **Within the context of a sporting competition**

- **Irregular alteration of the course of the result**
  - Does purposely targeting key players for injury suffice?

- **To obtain financial advantage**

- **Removing all or part of the uncertainty normally associated with the results of the competition**
  - Is this removing the uncertainty? Or just strategy?
Is this match-fixing?

• Under the National Action Plan definition:
  – probably yes.

• Under the European Council definition:
  – probably no.
Benefits of a common definition

- Consistency
- Better public understanding
- Helps to clearly define the problem
- Helps support national law development
- Contributes to harmonization
- Consistency in measuring effectiveness of match-fixing efforts
- Supports Good Governance
Conclusions

• You can’t effectively manage what you don’t define.
• NFL Bounties probably do not rise to the level of match-fixing – but it suggests the need for a clear(er) definition.
• The European Convention on Match-Fixing might better define it.
• “You know it when you see it” Does not support: “good governance”, development of laws, public understanding, or consistency.
Thank you for your attention!