

Every time I've logged on to the Play the Game website I find a new title for my presentation. A few weeks ago it was – "FIFA Update." I thought – I can do that. Then I looked last week and it said "FIFA - Hiding the bribes." Jens Weinreich has looked at them in one context tonight – I want to look at a little more.

And they are the story. It's the best story in town as we head towards the World Cup. The bribes are well hidden and I can't tell you the full story today. It's a developing story and a lot of it is locked up in my new book, now the property of my publisher. But we'll be in a shop near you soon. And on the web with lots for free.

Firstly, let's do some catching up.

We've lost some old friends from the world sports scene since we last met here.

We've lost Japanese IOC member Yoshiaki Tsutsumi. He was the developer who raped the Nagano mountains to build ski slopes for the 1998 winter Olympics. Now he's accused of financial crimes. Nobody's surprised.

French IOC member Guy Drut, a gold medal-winner at the 1976 Montreal Olympics, was recently given a 15-month suspended jail sentence and fined \$60,000 in a political scandal in Paris. Apparently he took a salary for a job that didn't exist.

When those nice folks at the IOC got me a 5-day jail sentence in 1994 for publishing the truth about them, they told the Swiss court I was lying for writing that Korean member Kim Un Yong was a crook.

The good news is that Kim Un Yong has been released early after serving 18 months of his sentence for fraud and theft of Olympic money.

Kim's gone and he's been followed by his old friend the Bulgarian IOC member Ivan Slavkov, caught last year on camera offering his vote for sale.

One of the few IOC members who voted to keep Slavkov in their ranks was FIFA president Sepp Blatter.

We should wonder . . . When will IOC president Rogge have the courage to evict Blatter?

As Ian “Magic” Hughes told you – Blatter suspended Antigua’s national association to prevent elections and try and keep corrupt football officials in power.

One casualty of this entirely unwarranted suspension was the Antiguan under-23 team in the Olympic qualifiers for the Caribbean region. They were banned from competing. For those young men, their Olympic dream was smashed.

IOC President Rogge and his Ethics Committee were silent about that one, frightened of picking a fight with a big beast like Blatter.

Blatter’s voice was silent when the athletes needed support. That is the only purpose of the IOC and this member failed in his obligations to the athletes.

What justification is there for Sepp Blatter to remain a member of the IOC?

There is something crucial about the current situation at FIFA you must know:

Mr Blatter and his entourage are very distracted at the moment.

There is great nervousness at FIFA’s offices in Zurich.

They wake up every day wondering if their version of the IOC’s Salt Lake scandal will engulf them before nightfall.

There’s been suppressed panic at FIFA since late in the year 2000 – that’s exactly five years ago - when insiders discovered that the ISL sports marketing company was heading irretrievably for collapse.

For more than two decades there was a cosy, corrupt relationship between the IOC, the IAAF, some smaller federations, FIFA – and the ISL company.

The company executives and the sports officials were confident they would never get caught. If reporters didn’t have company records and bank statements – they didn’t have any proof that bribes were paid.

Reporters like Jens Weinreich, Thomas Kistner and myself were sure that kickbacks had been paid on contracts – but we couldn’t get the proof.

Then in the year 2000 ISL was in big trouble. Their banks were pushing for repayment of huge loans. They'd made stupid investments.

The company collapsed and the unthinkable happened. All those dirty secrets fell into the hands of outsiders. Accountants looking for where the money went - and criminal investigators looking to see if the law had been broken.

The investigations have been going on since the spring of 2001. At last, there is a criminal case pending in Switzerland and hopefully during next year, if the evidence discovered by investigators is made public, we are all going to learn a lot more about the grease that lubricates the FIFA machine.

Mr Blatter's lawyers have been threatening me with court action for more than two years. I've a pile of letters from them.

But they never ever make any reference to one story I published in March 2003, revealing how one specific bribe was paid.

In documents discovered in the wreckage of the ISL company are lists of who the bribes went to. That's the Salt Lake scandal that looms over FIFA and every time you see Mr Blatter making outrageous and colourful statements about the state of football – ask yourself, is this yet another attempt to divert reporters away from dirty secrets bubbling beneath the surface?

You may remember that at the Opening ceremony of the World Cup in 2002 in Seoul, the fans booed Blatter. They were fed up with having to pay big money for tickets that had been put on the streets by FIFA officials. Blatter is now booed frequently when he appears at games.

Maybe, instead of booing, the fans should chant 'Who took the bribes? Tell us the names, . . . Who took the bribes? Tell us the names,'

FIFA are always telling us how transparent they are. So why won't they do this?

Have you ever tried testing FIFA's transparency ? Asking a question that makes Mr Blatter feel uncomfortable.

A while back I thought my readers might be interested to know how much money President Blatter pockets from FIFA.

The obvious person to ask was FIFA General Secretary and Director of Finance, Mr Urs Linsi.

You can trust Mr Linsi. In January 2003 he told FIFA's website:

"We should always remember to let the media and the public know what we are doing. There is huge public interest in FIFA, therefore we have to be as transparent as possible. We will try to communicate in a more open way concerning football matters so the world can believe us and be proud of their federation."

I emailed the transparent Mr Linsi:

"Please tell me what President Blatter earns in salary, pension contributions, cars, bonuses and any other perks?"

Mr Linsi didn't reply.

So I thought I would try FIFA Director of Communications, Markus Siegler.

I emailed him my question:

(Jennings) "Please will you disclose how much Sepp Blatter is paid."

(Siegler): "We can answer your question as follows:

'The matter of the compensation of the President was dealt with and decided unanimously at the Finance Committee at its meeting on 15 December 2002 in Madrid. The respective minutes have been ratified by the Executive Committee at its last meeting on 6 March 2003 here in Zurich.'

Thanks for your understanding.'

There was something missing. Siegler hadn't even begun to answer the question. So I tried again.

(Jennings) I don't understand. Why won't you tell me what Blatter earns?

(Siegler) 'We must abide by internal rules and cultural traditions. In Switzerland, salaries or income are simply not published.

Also, you must **not** question FIFA's dedication to transparency.'

I tried again: "How much is Blatter paid?"

(Siegler) "We told you already."

((Jennings) "No you didn't."

(Siegler) "Yes we did."

(Jennings) "So how much is he paid?"

(Siegler) "We told you already. And, anyway, who wants to know?"

I don't think Marcus Siegler understands what journalists do and what readers in free societies are entitled to expect from FIFA.

I went digging. I discovered a secret document proving that Blatter pays himself a huge, secret bonus.

My story said that former FIFA president Havelange had arranged, in great secrecy, for Blatter to get this payment every year.

I disclosed this in the London Daily Mail on March 18, 2003. Within hours FIFA's website announced, dramatically:

President Blatter has “instructed their lawyers to file law suits against Andrew Jennings and the Daily Mail.”

His press release said I published . . . “fiction.”

Other reporters were frightened of being sued so they didn't dare repeat my . . . “fiction.”

What happened next?

Nothing. Blatter didn't sue and later his lawyer admitted the story was true. Blatter did pay himself a secret bonus! It wasn't fiction!

But . . . they banned me from FIFA press conferences. That's an odd way to help make my reporting more accurate.

I suspect this is because I have seen a vast quantity of FIFA's confidential documents and they don't want other reporters knowing what's in them. Truth is a virus that can spread at high speed.

Now I get letters from FIFA's lawyers telling me my questions are ‘wholly unreasonable and a breach of acceptable standards of journalism.’

I'm not upset by their insults. I sympathise with Sepp Blatter and the terrible problems he has at the moment.

It's more than just hoping the bribes can be kept secret.

I'm sorry to have to tell you the very sad news that, once again, FIFA House in Zurich is a battleground.

After Blatter sacked the splendid Michel Zen-Ruffinen in 2002 – who we will be hearing from on Thursday - he claimed that peace and harmony had returned to FIFA house.

It's true that in 2002 Blatter got rid of a bunch of talented FIFA people who believed in honesty and principle. And he replaced them with a new generation who are in the mould of their president – ambitious, scheming and secretive.

Behind the smiles up at Zurich's Sunny Hill – Sonnenberg – the knives are out again.

General Secretary Urs Linsi has been trying to fire his deputy, Jerome Champagne.

That's because Mr Linsi fears that **he** may be fired and replaced by . . . Mr Champagne.

Mr Linsi writes letters to President Blatter complaining that Mr Champagne is guilty of 'misconduct . . . lack of professionalism . . . and disloyalty.'

Twice this year Linsi has tried to fire Champagne.

This war is now so bitter that it can only end in the professional death of one them.

Sources inside FIFA say the two rivals have come close to punching each other in recent months.

Mr Blatter needs Mr Champagne more than he needs Mr Linsi . . . But Mr Blatter can't fire Mr Linsi because he only fired his last general secretary 3 years ago. He would look foolish if he lost another chief executive so soon.

They are so engrossed inside FIFA trying to do damage limitation of the bribes scandal – and denying that there's another internal war – that they forget about the real world of football and the problems of the fans. I don't think FIFA cares about anything except itself and the interests of a handful of officials.

Football fans – to the leadership of FIFA – are suckers to be ripped off.

Look at the World Cup ticket rackets that have been running for months.

Fans hope to buy tickets through FIFA and the Organising committee.

The price of tickets ranges from around \$42 to just over \$700. The FIFA officials have already got theirs – some of them for nothing, they don't have to pay - and are selling them to the touts.

Just look online. Go to the site of the Los Angeles ticket agency, RazorGator.

They are offering tickets for every game in the tournament

They are offering Final tickets on July 9, with prices ranging between \$2,200 and \$3,800.

Some people- football officials in football blazers - are making hundreds and sometimes thousands of dollars profit from every single ticket.

At the 1998 World Cup in France one FIFA official submitted an order for 2,964 tickets. He came from a country with a population of less than 70,000 people. It's where Magic Hughes comes from.

This rip-off artist lives a long way from Europe. But in 2000 he was part of a racket to get tickets for the European Championship, writing to Uefa officials on the headed notepaper of his national association.

At the last World Cup some senior FIFA officials made a serious fortune out of tickets. One FIFA official made around \$250,000 from the 2002 final match. Yes, he pocketed \$250,000 in 2002 from one game and – he will do the same in Germany next year.

FIFA's credibility is poor and that's because of the poor quality of leadership.

What is the outside world expected to think of an organisation whose leaders are Sepp Blatter, Julio Grondona and Jack Warner?

You can only pray that somewhere in the lower reaches of FIFA are ambitious officials with clean intentions.

If they exist, they should have their reforms ready for when FIFA implodes under the weight of decades of unacceptable behaviour. When FIFA's Salt Lake scandal breaks.

Let's see real transparency.

It's time to start using modern information technology for the benefit of the global game and especially reporters who have not got the resources to travel to Zurich for FIFA press conferences.

Let's abolish secrecy at FIFA. Why shouldn't they put the minutes of executive committee meetings on their website? Why not add an audio link. Let's hear them working, as they claim, for the Good of the Game?

Let's have the finance committee live on the web – or downloadable later. They are spending billions behind closed doors. There's no justification for the secrecy.

Fans shut out of games to which FIFA's bosses have given themselves thousands of tickets might like to hear Finance Committee deputy chairman Jack Warner propose Blatter's secret salary — and approve his own expenses. Let's hear chairman Senor

Grondona explaining why he thought it necessary to give committee members (like himself) a 100 per cent pay rise in 2005.

Let's have the minutes of every FIFA committee available on the Web. Come to think of it FIFA could afford to offer the choice of audio or video. Look and see; we are already offered homemade videos of Blatter touring the world. Let's get the cameras inside FIFA House.

Hands up everyone who can understand the dense financial reports posted on fifa.com. Exactly. We need far more breakdown of figures showing where the money is going. And we should be permitted to see one key financial document. Every year auditors KPMG submit a confidential management letter. I've seen a few and they are far more interesting than the bland pap that goes on fifa.com. Can we have them please?

And let's see posted on the web those confidential accounts that every national association has with FIFA. Let's see how many tickets are being ordered. Every senior FIFA official and committee member has one of these secret accounts. Some are used to warehouse large amounts of cash so the tax inspector back home can't take a cut. Others reveal every kind of private expenditure – from buying champagne to toothpaste to air tickets for girlfriends and magazine subscriptions for family. And discount price sneakers from Adidas.

The fans would love a 'Who Gets World Cup Tickets?' webpage. They could list the lucky recipients. Real fans would love to know. How many tickets does Jack Warner get? What are the serial numbers? Let's know how many tickets are ordered by federations run by crooks. Honest officials would welcome the chance to reveal what they buy and deflect fans' suspicion and loathing of anybody in a FIFA blazer. National associations, reporters, fans could follow the money trail and find out for themselves whether the ticket rackets benefit football, or is just another way of sweetening the voters who keep Blatter in power.

How about justice being seen to be done? Some very odd decisions come out of the Disciplinary Committee, chaired by Blatter's friend Marcel Mathier.

Why can't their hearings and records and evidence be available on the web? No more secret courts, open the closed doors and let some sunshine in.

Then there's the gift culture. Fans, I'm sure, would love to see listed the gifts that have been given and accepted by FIFA's top officials, the valuable watches, the gold artefacts, the sweetheart contracts, the discretionary handouts. Across the world's democracies, the people's elected representatives have to own up to these things. So why not a transparent FIFA? And putting it all in the public domain would be a way of telling potential gift-givers – you can't do this in secret. If it ain't legit, don't offer it.

What this needs is a strong commitment from FIFA to sample a strange and dangerous bunch of fruits – honesty, integrity and transparency.

Last month President Blatter found a solution to the battles between Urs Linsi and his deputy, Jerome Champagne. Champagne has been moved to the security of the Presidential office where Linsi can't get at him. So there's a temporary truce.

And it's Jerome Champagne who is going to lead Mr Blatter's wonderful new task force against corruption in soccer.

Instead of Blatter seeking cheap headlines about Chelsea or other big European clubs, getting his speechwriter to dream up insulting lines about "semi-educated, sometimes foul-mouthed, players on £100,000 a week," he could quit the spindoctoring and the diversions and turn the spotlight on FIFA itself.

Here's some priorities for Mr Champagne.

One: What did the Zurich investigating magistrate mean when he said of football's president, "I have not concluded that Herr Blatter is innocent. He is innocent of certain things. That is not to say that nothing has happened. It simply means there isn't sufficient proof.'

Two: The liquidator of the ISL company told me, on the record and I've already published it, that he found black money payments to football officials. It wouldn't be too hard for Mr Champagne to get the list. If he wanted to.

Three: Who were the FIFA officials who made fortunes out of trading in World Cup tickets last time and plan to do so next year in Germany? Come on Mr Champagne, get to work. But he can't do any of these things. Can you imagine FIFA investigating FIFA?

That's our job. Let's get on with it.

Thank you.