



Betting in Sport

Position Statement developed by the International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education (ICSSPE)

Like sports, betting belongs to a family of games of judgement, knowledge and skill. Both also necessarily involve a certain degree of chance or luck in the determination of the sporting outcomes. Where the chance or luck element is taken away, by match fixing or bribery, deception overtakes fairness; and not only gambling but the sporting contests themselves become meaningless.

Betting is today a global phenomenon, with increasing expenditure levels. Although betting may take as its objects anything from politics to weather, sport is the most popular. It offers easy and good objects for those who wish to use their judgement, knowledge, skill and money for betting. Betting produces contradictory effects in sports. On the one hand, it is a passive hobby without any positive health impacts, while on the other hand substantial sums of money arising from betting goes to sport organisations directly or indirectly. From a purely sporting perspective there is no reason to support the activity of betting. Nevertheless, it is a fact that in the modern world, gambling and sports have been longstanding fellows, and that some of the drivers for standardisation of sporting contests have been driven by the needs of the gambling industry. Therefore, despite the fact that ICSSPE does not recommend betting as a leisure pursuit, it recognises its ubiquity in the modern sports world.

Advanced societies, their sports organisations and their legal forces, are today better aware of the disadvantages of sports gambling, and criminal activity surrounding it, than previously, because of the number of cheating cases and scandals which have been detected during recent years in sport. Bribery and match-fixing have occurred in cricket, football and snooker, where vast sums of money have been spent. On the global stage, the International Football Federation FIFA has thus far taken the greatest strides in preventing bribery and match-fixing of the international sport federations. It is likely that if other international federations were to do the same, new cases would be detected of bribery and match-fixing in sports would be uncovered.

It is evident that sport federations alone cannot prevent illegal and unethical activities surrounding gambling in sports. In fact, this problem concerns not only lottery and betting operators but the whole of society, in terms of their norms and values relating to gambling. Without common measures of all these partners, bribery and match-fixing are difficult to prevent. ICSSPE is hopeful that the Council of Europe will seriously address the issue as part of its legislative agenda. The Council of Europe has been a protagonist at state level in the battle against doping; and it can do the same also in the battle against bribery and match-fixing. Betting is a global phenomenon. It is therefore necessary that states other than the members of the Council of Europe are committed to prevention of misuses in betting: but this international cooperation must be begun somewhere. We believe that the Council of Europe is the most appropriate inter-governmental organisation to take a lead.

The opinion of ICSSPE is that the state owned - or at least state - supervised lottery and betting companies offer the best opportunity to begin the effort to prevent misuses in betting. Organisational solutions are



important here. State organisations have responsibility to effect legislation in relation to the present situation in betting markets, including on-line betting over the internet. In this respect the Council of Europe can help coordinate the activities of its member states. For example, the introduction of a specific offence "sport fraud" may be a useful starting point.

The biggest challenge to sports fraud legislation in the case of bribery and match-fixing will be to provide prosecutors with sufficient evidence. There is no legal obligation in sport for competitors to do their utmost in each event or match. We all know that, for example, a football team concentrate on some matches more than on some other matches or that a tennis player may not do everything to win an unimportant match. How it will be possible to differentiate match-fixing from such normal activities in sport is a significant challenge. The consequence of this difficulty has been that many doubtful cases have been lost due to a lack of evidence. ICSSPE supports all means to develop the possibilities to provide evidence on bribery and match-fixing, including cooperation between the police of different states and Interpol.

ICSSPE welcomes the Council of Europe's commitment to pay significant attention to the fact that many international and national sport federations do not take misuses in betting sufficiently seriously. They must be made aware in this respect, since the unethical and illegal activities surrounding sports gambling threaten the very essence and values of sport by undermining fair play. The awareness of these problems is the precondition for the preventive measures. For its part, ICSSPE is ready to take part in the activities against misuses in betting in sport and will include this issue in the next world-wide sport scientific conference ICSEMIS in Glasgow in 2012.