



The Fix: Soccer and Organized Crime

By Declan Hill

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The Fix is the most explosive story of sports corruption in a generation. Intriguing, riveting, and compelling, it tells the story of an investigative journalist who sets out to examine the world of match-fixing in professional soccer.

From the Introduction

Understand how gambling fixers work to corrupt a soccer game and you will understand how they move into a basketball league, a cricket tournament, or a tennis match (all places, by the way, that criminal fixers have moved into). My views on soccer have changed. I still love the Saturday-morning game between amateurs: the camaraderie and the fresh smell of grass. But the professional game leaves me cold. I hope you will understand why after reading the book. I think you may never look at sport in the same way again.

From the Hardcover edition.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Declan has written a well-researched book of investigative journalistic brilliance. A book that deals with the unseen and often shadowy world of soccer's match-fixing. . . . A world the authorities try to ignore; the effects of its existence swept under the carpet in the name of preserving the game's image."

—Shaka Hislop, ESPN soccer commentator and former English Premier League and World Cup goalkeeper

"Fascinating. . . . Part true-crime potboiler, part spy thriller, part academic discourse and part journey of personal discovery."

— Stephen Brunt, *Globe and Mail*

"A powerful investigative work.... **The Fix** is a fascinating read."

— *Ottawa Citizen*

"Sensationa.... Fascinating.... [Hill] makes a good case."

— *Winnipeg Free Press*

"An explosive book."

— *Daily Mail*

"Declan Hill literally takes his life into his own hands.... [He] presents convincing evidence that even games in the 2006 World Cup in Germany were fixed.... Read this book and you'll second guess every referee's dodgy call."

— *Replay* magazine

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About the Author

Declan Hill is an investigative journalist and academic. He specializes in organized crime and international issues. In the last few years, he has completed documentaries on the killing of the head of the Canadian mafia, blood feuds in Kosovo, and ethnic cleansing in Iraq. Hill has also won awards for documentaries on honour killings in Turkey, and the murder of journalists in the Philippines. He was a Chevening Scholar at Green College, University of Oxford, and received his doctorate for his study of match-fixing in professional soccer.

From the Hardcover edition.

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At first, I was interested in the general issue of organized crime in soccer. I was particularly fascinated with the concept of image laundering, where a previously unknown gangster takes over a prominent club or links himself with a famous player and begins to transform himself from a "controversial businessman" to a "colourful businessman" to, when his team or player wins the championship, a "member of the establishment." The most successful proponent of this skill was Joseph Kennedy, who had gone from a bootlegging scumbag supplying the mob with liquor in the midst of Prohibition in one generation to being

the father of the president of the United States in the next. However, events overtook me. Some of the top teams in Europe were bought up by people so corrupt that you would hesitate to have your wife, son, or wallet within a hundred yards of them. Yet no one seemed to have stopped them.

However, I began to become interested in the subject of match-fixing. It was, in the words of one worried tennis executive I spoke to, “the ultimate threat to the credibility of the sport.”

I visited some of the world’s most famous soccer stadiums, teams, and games to see organized criminals in action. I investigated leagues where Chinese triads have fixed more than 80 per cent of the games; and I found that top international referees often get offered, and accept, “female bribes” before they arbitrate some of the biggest games in soccer.

When I first started giving lectures at Oxford, people were surprised to hear about the connections between organized crime and sport. I gave presentations at international conferences. I said publicly, and at some risk to myself because my research was not finished, that European sport leagues were facing a tsunami of match-fixing by Asian criminals. Few people wanted to believe it. Even fewer people seemed to want to do anything about it. It was mostly, as I will show, out of incompetence and racist ignorance. It was also because the factors that have given rise to this new wave of fixing are unprecedented and have never really been seen or studied before. But it was in small part because of a phenomenon that was recognized more than eighty years ago. It was supposed to have occurred during the scandal surrounding the trial of baseball’s Chicago White Sox. The team threw the 1919 World Series with the help of mobster Arnold Rothstein. One of their players was the clean-cut star “Shoeless” Joe Jackson. As Jackson came up to the courthouse, a little boy was supposed to have elbowed his way through the crowd, gazed up at his hero with big, clear, innocent eyes, and said, “Say it ain’t so, Joe. Just say it ain’t so.” The little boy represents the faith that we embody in our sporting heroes. We do not want to believe that human frailty lurks within them. We do not want to believe that they, who can do what we cannot, would stoop to sully themselves. We do not want to believe, when so much in our lives is so corrupt, that the garden of innocence that is supposed to be sport could also be corrupt.

In my journey I did find real heroes: people who have attempted to clean up the world’s “beautiful game.” They have, for the most part, been marginalized, stamped on, or silenced. Their stories are littered throughout this book: failed journalists, dead referees, ignored players. I will also introduce you to some of the fixers, criminals, and con men who corrupt the sport. Whenever possible I have tried to allow the criminals to speak for themselves, using verbatim transcripts of either their interviews or covertly recorded conversations. The work has, at times, been difficult and dangerous. For that reason, in some places in the text, I have changed the locations of the interviews and the names of both the innocent and the guilty. (The first time that I introduce someone whose name has been changed, I will place an asterisk beside it in the text.) I have done that to protect myself and my interview subjects from all the dangers that a reader can imagine.

I have also tried to show the results of my research at the university. Woven through the journey, I try to explain how soccer players and referees actually perform in fixed games, the structure and mechanics of illegal gambling syndicates, why relatively rich and high-status athletes would fix games, why club officials decide to try to bribe the opposition, how clubs go about doing it, how they get referees “on their side” and how, I believe, Asian gambling fixers have successfully entered the game and fixed top international matches. I found that many of these underlying criminal mechanics are not only found in soccer. Really, the methods, manners, and motivations of the fixers could work for almost any other team sport, be it hockey, basketball, or baseball. Consequently, I have put in examples from other sports to show the similarities. Understand how gambling fixers work to corrupt a soccer game and you will understand how they move into

a basketball league, a cricket tournament, or a tennis match (all places, by the way, that criminal fixers have moved into).

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Users Review

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