



**PROTECT  
INTEGRITY**

# SUGGESTED PROTOCOLS

for Player Associations  
**ON PLAYERS REPORTING MATCH  
FIXING CONCERNS**

## BACKGROUND

This document provides advice and guidance to player associations about how to handle reports from players about match fixing concerns. It arises from the player associations' discussions in Athens in October 2013 at the EC funded seminar on match fixing prevention. We are grateful to the 19 player associations from 10 different countries and 11 sports which took part in the discussions. Whilst everyone will need to adapt the protocols for their sports rules and national legal system the following is a starting point to help associations come to terms with this difficult subject.

### ► INTRODUCTION

Players are being educated about sports betting integrity and that they should report any suspicious approaches. It is essential that the player associations are therefore ready to receive such reports and act properly. There are likely to be criminal laws involved so associations need to act to the highest standards.

Whilst player associations exist to protect their members there is also an over-arching duty to protect the integrity of their sport thereby looking after the interests of all current and future members.

### ► IS IT AGAINST THE RULES?

Does your sport have rules and regulations covering match fixing and if so does it have a positive duty to report approaches? Make sure everyone in your association knows the rules. In particular you need to know whether your association staff are covered by the rules and whether you have a positive duty to report any information you are aware of.

Even if your sport has no rules the following advice is based upon best practice across a number of other sports. There may be merit in using this document to help shape your country and sports policies.



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## INTERNAL PROTOCOL

### ► BE PREPARED

When a match fixing scandal happens it can move quickly into a high profile media story. Player associations need to be prepared to protect their own reputation and ensure that they look after the interests of their players effectively.

Have one designated expert for handling match fixing issues. Everyone should have some knowledge but its best to have a lead member of staff.

The lead officer should establish contacts with the national betting regulator (if it exists), betting companies and the federations so that you develop a relationship with people. You should also think about developing a contact with the police force and you must speak to a lawyer who you have identified as someone to put players in contact with.



### ► FIRST CONTACT

**Everyone (including the receptionist) in your association needs to know what to do if a player reports a concern about match fixing to them. The following are some key areas to consider :**

- Whatever you do, do not ignore it or dismiss anything.
- Tell the player that if they may have broken the law it will be safest for them to speak directly to a lawyer as these conversations are protected by legal privilege. It is possible, but unlikely, that the player association staff could be compelled to give evidence against a player in court. Ask for their phone number and get a lawyer to call them straight back.
- Be aware that phone calls may be being tapped / listened to by the police if a player is already under investigation.
- If you feel the player has not broken the law then try to coax as much information as you can from the initial discussion – players may change their mind afterwards. – try to find out who (and what they looked like), what, where, when and how?
- As soon as you can afterwards make a (hand) written note of the discussion and pass it on to the designated lead member of staff.
- Assess the urgency of the issue and act accordingly. As a general rule it is better to act calmly.
- Assess the initial tip. Is it from a believable person, is there likely to be any ulterior motive and is there any supporting evidence?
- Keep a written record of your decisions and the reasons for them.
- Keep the information confidential until you are ready to tell external agencies. This means that it is normally best to have as few people as possible in the know.



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## PLAYER v PLAYER

Be aware that in many sports, experience suggests that it may be a player or ex-player who makes a suspicious approach. This raises difficulties especially when it is one current member against another.

It is essential that you do not jeopardise an investigation by alerting the other player involved. This could result in serious criminal charges in perverting the course of justice.

Realistically an association cannot act for both parties. It is normal to provide a lawyer for the accused party or at very least recommend a lawyer.

If you have a federation that you trust and has an effective match fixing policy it may be best to encourage the player to report straight to the federation rather than through the player association.

## FEDERATION PROTOCOL

### ▶ **ROLE OF FEDERATIONS**

As a general rule the national federation will be the organisation that you need to report any issues to. Make sure you know in advance to whom you need to speak.

Before there is any issue try to meet with the person and agree some broad protocols with the federation. These can be informal or written down. A protocol with your federation should include :

- Confidentiality requirements for whistle blowers.
- Player may be guilty of failing to report earlier – look at getting immunity for minor breaches of sports rules and/or reduction for self reporting.
- Job protection for whistle blowers.
- When can reports be anonymous?

### ▶ **WHAT IF THERE ARE NOT REGULATIONS IN PLACE FOR YOUR SPORT?**

**You are strongly encouraged to develop your own code (based on EU Athletes code of conduct) and work together with your federation to enact this code.**

Sports need to have good, clear and well understood rules in place in order to fight against match fixing. The federation should be firmly encouraged by your association to put rules in place before facing your first crisis.

Not all the government in Europe have the proper laws in

place yet. To find out if your country does please see "Mapping of criminal provisions in EU 27 - KEA European affairs – 2012". The player associations should take a lead and urge its law makers to create proper laws to fight match fixing. These laws must respect athletes' fundamental rights.



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## MEDIA PROTOCOL



**Have only one point of media contact to ensure a consistent message.**

**Leaks happen in all organisation so try to keep number of staff who know about the issue small in the first instance.**

**Ideally keep the story out of the press for as long as possible but once journalists ask about the story you need to respond.**

**Do not lie to the media – it is acceptable to say “no comment” or “I will get back to you” but lying creates problems later on.**

### **AS A RULE IT IS BETTER TO PREPARE A SIMPLE STATEMENT ALONG THE FOLLOWING LINES**

- ▶ say what work you have done in the past, eg education policies.
- ▶ according to sports rules there has been a report of an approach which
  - is being analysed.
  - or has been passed on to the authorities.
- ▶ Issue is under investigation and due process will be followed.
- ▶ It would be inappropriate to make any further comment at this time.



**Alternatively it may be that you want to put a story into the media as the federation and/or government is not doing anything. This again needs to be handled carefully and should probably just be the last resort.**

**We would strongly suggest that the anonymity of players is protected. You need to make sure that you do nothing that could jeopardise any ongoing investigations.**



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# SAFETY PROTOCOL

Try to assess if the players safety, or that of his family, is at risk?

The players safety is the first concern – more so than the sport or the match.

Is there a police contact you can use? As a general rule the player association should not be getting involved in security or police matters. Leave it to the experts.



## CONCLUSION

**One size does not fit all. How we act depends so much upon the sports rules, how seriously the federation and government takes this issue and the specifics of the case.**

**However what is important is that as a player association we are ready to help our members if they approach us with concerns.**

**It can be very helpful to act through a couple of scenarios with your staff to make sure that the association is prepared and has thought through some of the issues.**

**Plan ahead and keep the plan updated at least once a year.**



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