

# ANTI-CORRUPTION HELPDESK

PROVIDING ON-DEMAND RESEARCH TO HELP FIGHT CORRUPTION

## BEST PRACTICES FOR WHISTLEBLOWING IN SPORT

### QUERY

What are good practices in establishing whistleblowing mechanisms in sports to combat corruption, match-fixing and other illegal and unethical practice in sports?

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### SUMMARY

Sport is a sector that is particularly vulnerable to corruption, characterised by large revenue streams and often inadequate transparency and oversight mechanisms. The multitude of players involved, from private firms, public institutions, charities, amateur sporting associations, civil society and fans also complicates efforts to tackle corruption on and off the pitch.

Whistleblowers face numerous challenges when speaking up about sports corruption. The very nature of corruption in sport makes speaking out against match-fixing, doping or other ethical behaviour fraught with potential dangers of retaliation. Whistleblowers face pushback from numerous sources, including sports officials, criminal organisations and even fellow athletes.

There are steps that can be taken to promote whistleblowing in sport as it relates to corruption. Channels to denounce corruption, as well as proactive support mechanisms for whistleblowers can encourage athletes, coaching staff and officials to come forward. Some sports governing bodies have taken significant steps to provide whistleblowers with the access and support necessary to make use of the information they provide.

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## 1. OVERVIEW OF CORRUPTION IN SPORT

While corruption in sport dates back to the ancient Olympic games (Gorse and Chadwick 2011), tackling corruption in modern sport has gained increasing attention due to a series of recent high profile scandals that have hit some of the most important international sport organisations (Rowe 2017).

The profits of sport, and the economic and political privileges often afforded to sports governing bodies (SGBs), have not translated into the widespread adoption of anti-corruption safeguards. A majority of high profile scandals in modern sport have not stemmed from internal investigations undertaken by teams, clubs and SGBs, but from the actions of a small number of individuals who chose to report unethical behaviour in their sport.

However, blowing the whistle on corruption in sport differs from other sectors, as corruption in sport presents particular challenges. Most notably, the sports industry involves enormous revenue streams, is present in virtually every country and typically has weak oversight. Governance of the sector is complicated, as it involves multinational business, government, civil society and the general public.

### Background

Corruption in sport does not equate to cheating or breaking the rules of the game as established by SGBs. Rather, corruption in sport "involves any illegal, immoral or unethical activity that attempts to deliberately distort the result of a sporting contest for the personal material gain of one or more parties involved in that activity" (Gorse and Chadwick 2011). Adam Masters (2015) notes that corruption in sport may also pertain to setting rules for private gain to the detriment of public expectations of how a sport should be played.

Traditional forms of corruption can also be present in the sport sector, whereby the organisation and logistics of sporting events and structures are manipulated for private gain.

SGBs regulate and organise sport from the amateur, grassroots level to the international, professional level.

As such, SGBs are often at the heart of corruption scandals and are central to efforts to stamp out corruption in sport. SGBs generally take the form of private or public-private enterprises, sometimes under a tax exempt status, and can exist within larger sports organisations (Henne 2015). For example, a local basketball league may be affiliated, if not directly by association, to a national basketball association, which may be associated with an international governing body responsible for setting the base game rules for the sport and organising international competitions.

Sport is generally financed from a variety of sources, but funds typically come from either government support (either through dedicated funds or through tax exemptions and subsidies for teams and athletes) or from businesses. Businesses finance SGBs through sponsorship contracts or by buying broadcasting and merchandising rights from these governing bodies. Many teams, sports clubs and even athletes that participate in SGBs are business entities in their own right, with their own sponsors and merchandising rights sales (Gorse and Chadwick 2010). In some cases, for clubs, teams or athletes to be admitted into competitions or associations they must pay a base fee, though this is generally in professional level SGBs. Spectators also contribute to sport financing by purchasing tickets and merchandise, and providing the audience advertisers target.

The sports landscape is further complicated by gambling and gaming businesses as well as clandestine criminal actors. Gambling and betting companies deserve particular mention in sports governance, as they are private companies whose profits derive from the specific outcomes of sporting events, rather than from contracts or sponsorship. While some countries prohibit gambling on sporting events, at the global level, sports betting was valued at US\$70 billion in 2016 internationally; in 2012, the e-betting industry alone was valued at over £50 billion (Masters 2015).

In countries where sports betting – or at least certain forms of it, like "spot betting" – is not legal, criminal elements undertake the role of bookie and collector (McMillen 2001). While the value of the illegal betting market is unknown, there is some indication as to its scale based on sample cases. During the 2010 World Cup in South Africa, Interpol uncovered an illegal

betting operation that, from two weeks of operation, had accumulated US\$150 million in bets and US\$9 million in profits (Howman 2012). In 2014, it was estimated that, in the United States alone, illegal betting on sports ranged from US\$25 billion to US\$380 billion (Weissmann 2014)

Internationally, in 2015, global sport revenues were valued at an estimated US\$145 billion annually (Henne 2015). International sporting events and tournaments bring in massive revenue and, despite the fact that most international SGBs claim to be not-for-profit, these organisations manage monumental revenue streams. These organisations operate as businesses insofar as they have bodies of permanent staff, contractors for goods and services, and teams of legal and financial advisors. It is in this general context that corruption in sport occurs.

#### *Hosting rights*

Hosting a sporting event has tremendous costs for a city or country that is willing to do so (Henne 2015), including, at the very least, increased infrastructure and security costs to accommodate incoming spectators and athletes. Nevertheless, bids to host sporting events are rarely lacking, as public and private sports governance actors perceive economic, social and psychological benefits in hosting sporting events.

Delegations of private and public actors often lobby SGBs to gain the rights to host these sporting events. In many cases, SGBs have implemented regulated bidding processes to award hosting rights to cities and countries to streamline these actions and award hosting rights against a certain set of criteria, which differ according to the SGB in question. While these processes aim to rationalise hosting rights adjudication, lack of transparency and lax rules regarding conflicts of interests increase the risk of corruption in these negotiations.

Negotiations and bidding processes for bidding rights can be influenced by bribes to benefit one hosts' bid over another, to the detriment of the sporting event and the athletes involved. Selecting bids on the basis of corruption may have negative consequences for the sport, as events may not rely on appropriate sporting facilities or infrastructure. In turn, this may deter athletes from participating in events and spectators in

attending (Henne 2015). Furthermore, future potential hosts may not mount a bid because of the perceived difficulty of winning a bid without corrupt behaviour.

While there are numerous cases of bid rigging in international SGBs, one of the most notorious cases is the case of the 2022 FIFA World Cup, awarded to Qatar. FIFA officials allegedly took bribes from Qatari delegates to influence their decision. Qatar was awarded the tournament despite a number of concerns raised, such as inadequate infrastructure, unsuitable climatic conditions, questionable labour and human rights policies, and Qatar's relative obscurity as a footballing nation (Burrow 2016; Rowe 2017).

#### *Corruption in event organisation and logistics*

The organisation of a sporting event requires, at the very minimum, additional investment in sports and logistical infrastructure, as well as security, for the influx of athletes and spectators expected to attend an event. These logistical and infrastructure undertakings generally involve multimillion dollar contracts and are procured for directly by private or public-private organisations, where procurement standards are often below the standard expect of public sector procurement processes.

Beyond procurement for specific sporting events, there are also corruption risks related to other areas of sports logistics. One of the most notable examples is the sale of broadcasting rights, which involves large contracts from a variety of international actors in closed door negotiations. An example of this type of corruption can be seen in the construction of Bayern Munich and TSV Munich 1800's stadium, where management executives allegedly received bonuses from an Austrian construction company participating in the bidding process (Maennig 2005).

Furthermore, given that sport is a multimillion-dollar industry run, in many cases, by non-profit or tax-exempt organisations, there is a particular risk of money laundering and tax evasion. International SGBs tend to keep financial reserves to buttress unexpected or emergency costs, which raises the risk of money laundering (Peurala 2013). Moreover, some SGBs are known to favour keeping their accounts in jurisdictions with secretive banking laws (Peurala 2013).

### *Manipulation of sporting results*

Beyond the organisation and logistics behind sporting events, which essentially fall under the category of private sector corruption, the results of sporting events themselves can fall prey to corrupt practices.

Fundamentally, the primary objective of SGBs is to regulate a sport, monitoring that it is being played in a manner that ensures competitiveness, integrity and fairness, and punishing instances where athletes and teams deviate from these criteria. In this regard, SGBs have the responsibility of establishing and enforcing rules, and sanctioning those found guilty of deviating from expected behaviour. Any abuse of these functions for private gain or to arbitrarily benefit a particular team or athlete is considered corruption. Maennig (2005) refers to this as “competition results created by non-competition decisions”.

Corrupt practices within these SGB processes can lead to arbitrary decision making off the field that can affect outcomes on the field. This form of organisational capture by corrupt elements can have a detrimental effect on the competitiveness of a certain sport, making it less appealing both for athletes and for spectators. A good example of this type of corruption can be seen in the World Boxing Council's decision to manipulate rankings to strip Graciaono Rocchigiani of a world champion title, in the belief that crowning a runner-up as champion would make the organisation more money (Maennig 2005).

### *Match-fixing*

Match-fixing relates to actions taken by teams, athletes and/or officials to modify the result of a match or to carry out certain actions in a match to the private benefit of an athlete, team or third party. In the case of players and teams, this may involve playing the sport in a way to guarantee a certain result or to guarantee a certain event within the match (this is called spot-fixing). In the case of match officials, match-fixing generally involves these officials granting favourable or unfavourable treatment towards a particular athlete or team.

While the way match-fixing is carried out largely depends on the sport, athletes and officials can be bribed, coerced or influenced to give an edge to one

team. Teams may collude to guarantee a certain result that may benefit both teams to the detriment of a third.

The majority of recorded cases of match-fixing involve the participation of the gambling and betting industry (Gorse and Chadwick 2011); players and teams modify their performance to guarantee the result that they have a stake in. Both legal and illegal betting and gambling operators have stakes in guaranteeing that a result plays out a certain way to maximise their profit (McMillen 2001). There are numerous recorded instances of explicit bribery undertaken by some of these actors to influence player performance or to influence match officials.

A study of cases of corruption in sport from around the world between 2000 and 2010 found that only 2.73 per cent of convictions were related to cases of match-fixing (Gorse and Chadwick 2011). The authors of this study conclude that match-fixing is both difficult to prove from a prosecutor's perspective, as well as not uniformly regulated worldwide, resulting in fewer cases being brought to court. The frequency of match-fixing may be more widespread: in a 2004 survey of college-level basketball players in the United States, 2.1 per cent of respondents claimed they had been approached with bribes to deliberately score less (Borghesi 2008). The director of Sportradar, a company which supplies sports and betting-related data services, has stated his concern that 10 per cent of the football matches in Europe are potentially subject to match rigging (Veuthey 2014).

### *Doping and nobbing*

Doping and nobbing are sports crimes that aim to chemically modify the performance of a player to influence the result of a match or competition. Doping refers to actions taken to improve the performance of the player, while nobbing refers to actions taken to debilitate or reduce the performance of a player or, more commonly, of animals linked to the sport (for example in horse-racing, greyhound racing or polo).

While doping and nobbing are considered sports crimes in most SGBs, corruption plays a large role in the prevention and detection of doping and nobbing. This can range from the bribing testing officials and turning a blind eye to abuses to altering the results of a test and the purposeful omission of results by SGB officials.

There are numerous cases of corruption related to doping and nobbing. A notable example is that of the International Cyclist Union (UCI), which allegedly colluded with cyclist Lance Armstrong and other members of the United States Postal Service team to bypass certain mandatory doping tests and to ignore suspicious reports. While no monetary bribes were exchanged, a report by the UCI's Independent Commission for Reform in Cycling claims that Armstrong provided UCI leadership with tacit favours in exchange for turning a blind eye (Fotheringham 2018).

## 2. WHISTLEBLOWING IN SPORT

### Overview

The glaring corruption risks within SGBs have only recently led to significant changes to their internal structures and mechanisms to detect and address corruption. Most major corruption scandals in the past decade originated from whistleblower reports (Forest et al. 2008; Anderson 2015), where individuals came forward to denounce a corrupt or unethical practice or to share information which helped to detect a corrupt practice. Whistleblowing continues to be an essential way to uncover wrongdoing within an organisation or governing body. For example, a 2016 report by the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (ACFE) found that in more than 2,400 cases of fraud in 114 countries, around 40 per cent were uncovered through tip-offs (ACFE, 2016).

Due to the importance of whistleblowing in uncovering corruption in sport, considerable literature on the subject has emerged. This ranges from academic studies to policy recommendations from numerous organisations working on improving integrity in sport. The following section addresses whistleblowing in the context of sport. The final section focusses on best practices for whistleblowing in sport and provides some country examples.

### Challenges

It is important to note that while whistleblowing is extremely valuable for detecting and sanctioning corruption, it is a relatively rare practice in both the public and private sector. Whistleblowing in any sector carries with it a significant risk of retaliation and

retribution for those that blow the whistle. There is a notable stigma associated with blowing the whistle across countries and sectors (Kelly & Jones 2013).

Furthermore, if proper mechanisms are not in place to protect whistleblowers and act on their complaints, it is probable that potential future whistleblowers will be reluctant to come forward (Whitaker et al. 2014). Recent examples show that despite progress, many SGBs continue to present an environment full of risk for potential whistleblowers. For example, FIFA's updated 2018 code of conduct includes a new defamation clause that will likely further silence potential whistleblowers, who may fear retaliation should their claim get out into the public domain.

When it comes to whistleblowing in sport, the context in which the whistleblowers come forward heavily influences the perceived credibility of their allegations and the likelihood that action will be taken.

#### *Esprit de corps*

Esprit de corps, roughly meaning team spirit is a key component in all team sports. Members of teams are expected to make sacrifices and be loyal to teammates in the face of adversity on the playing field. As it relates to deviant or corrupt behaviours, camaraderie can produce a culture of silence, where teammates turn a blind eye to unethical practices for the perceived good of the collective.

While an essential part of team sports, esprit de corps can have a detrimental effect on potential whistleblowers. Potential whistleblowers might refrain from denouncing corruption by a few teammates in order to not put the team at risk of punishment. The fear of ostracism or rejection by teammates might also lead potential whistleblowers to keep silent.

A recent study interviewed athletes in team sports on their views of whistleblowers, and found that most athletes were not likely to report doping by teammates to authorities (Whitaker et al. 2014). Most respondents interviewed cited undue punishment of other teammates or of the team as a whole as a disincentive to blow the whistle.

The feeling of team spirit is not limited to athletes, but may also apply to all staff, officials and supporters within a team or club that choose to remain silent to

abuses for the benefit of the club or team. For example, Steve Menary (2006) makes special mention of small nations or local delegations within FIFA. Menary notes that politicians concerned with governance or corruption within their national associations are deterred from intervening because of a fear that they will jeopardise their national association and as a result anger fans and damage their own popularity.

This situation is complicated by FIFA's insistence on the independence of national associations from domestic political intervention. Five per cent of teams suspended between 2005 and 2010 were suspended as a result of their domestic government intervening in their administration. Consequentially, well-meaning politicians concerned about corruption in sport must choose between intervening and risking expulsion from international football, or allowing the status quo to continue unabated.

#### *Athlete performance*

The potential effects of whistleblowing on athlete performance may also deter athletes from coming forward. On the one hand, athletes may refrain from reporting wrongdoing if they fear that retribution from officials, teammates or competitors on the playing field might impact their performance. On the other hand, studies have shown clear negative side effects on athlete health and performance after coming forward as whistleblowers (Greaves & McGlone 2012). These effects are aggravated if the athletes are not protected from retaliation or do not receive an appropriate response from sports authorities (McGlynn & Richardson 2014).

Professional athletes, who depend on their performance to sustain their livelihoods, may opt to remain silent rather than put in jeopardy their (generally) short professional careers as professional athletes.

#### *Amateurism and grassroots sport*

A number of scholars cite the amateur elements in sport as notable impediment to the development of integrity networks in sport. The argument is that professional and ethical standards in sport develop at the grassroots level where nepotism, cronyism and favouritism are common practices (Navarro 2010,

Mason et al. 2006). When officials reach higher levels of sport, they maintain the same problematic organisational structures and ethical positions. This creates SGBs that are not receptive to whistleblower complaints and may ignore or actively castigate their actions (Bures 2008).

Grassroots sport has by far the highest level of popular participation and direct involvement and comprises the largest number of governing bodies, primarily local associations or sports clubs. The result is that the environment in which they govern is complicated and diverse (Kirkeby 2016). Therefore, if corrupt practices are common at the lower levels of sport, they may gain more acceptance and seep into higher rungs of the sport. Nowy and Breuer (2017 cited in Kihl et al. 2017) examined the extent of match-fixing in European grassroots football from an organisational capacities framework and found that in the five countries surveyed there were serious corruption problems at the grassroots level that closely mirrored forms of corruption in higher levels of sport.

Amateur and lower tier SGBs tend to place less emphasis on integrity management, allocate fewer resources to rooting out corruption and are less concerned about controlling player and team conduct than at higher levels where there is more visibility due to the involvement of sponsors, fans and state bodies.

This is despite the resources that local SGBs and clubs receive from athlete and youth development programmes and "commissions" or "finders fees" that professional teams may pay for athletes originating from these levels (Temitope 2018).

#### *Competition vs. collusion*

The inner working of each individual sport may have differing effects on the drive for individuals to come forward as whistleblowers. The study by Whitaker et al. (2014), for example, notes that athletes in some sports disciplines, particularly track and field events, were more likely to report doping practices of competitors to authorities, citing the unfair edge that this grants their competitors to their detriment.

Yet, in the case of match-fixing, it is more likely for athletes in non-team sports to collude to fix a match or sway a score a certain way. Whitaker et al. (2014) argue that because team sports require collusion by

two opposing teams, it is more likely to find possible detractors and potential whistleblowers within the teams or within the coaching staff of the teams. In contrast, a sport that pits only two athletes against each other, like tennis, badminton or wrestling, makes collusion to fix a match much easier and much less risky, as fewer actors are involved.

To illustrate this point, a recent scandal in professional sumo wrestling, whereby a number of athletes fixed matches, was only discovered after an investigation by police who uncovered suspicious SMS messages that pointed to collusion (Carpenter 2012).

#### *Betting and gambling platforms*

Recent studies have also noted the risk added by globalised betting and gambling platforms. The existence of globalised, internet-accessible betting platforms grants access to sports betting for citizens worldwide, regardless of the legality of gambling in the country (Henne 2015; Bricknell 2015). This makes the detection of suspicious bets much harder, as these bets may be placed in a country that is unrelated to the match being played (McMillen 2001; Forest et al. 2008)

As it relates to whistleblowing, spot betting<sup>1</sup> has made collusion between players and betting companies (whether legal or not) harder to detect. In cases of spot-fixing, the action may be indistinguishable in the scope of a full game, and the only potential whistleblowers are the actors who are involved in the collusion (McMillen 2001).

#### *Criminal participation in sport*

It is estimated that 25 per cent of the sports industry is owned by criminal organisations (Rumbsy 2014 in Henne 2015). Not only do criminal organisations operate illegal betting networks in countries where it is not legal (or where only certain types of betting are legal), but organised crime has infiltrated SGBs, and criminal and hooligan groups are frequently associated with teams and sports (Herrera 2017; Peurala 2013; Di Ronco & Lavorgna 2015).

It is important to consider that whistleblowers who blow the whistle on corruption may be knowingly or inadvertently taking action against criminal elements within sport. Thus, potential whistleblowers may be reluctant to come forward if they consider that they may be in danger of crossing criminal elements within an organisation.

#### **Best practices in whistleblowing in sports**

There are a number of best practices that scholars and anti-corruption practitioners have identified to ensure that whistleblowers' accusations are properly addressed and that those that choose to come forward are appropriately protected.

It is important to consider different policies depending on the actors involved and the alleged corruption they are blowing the whistle on. For example, the process of receiving complaints from a worker in a construction firm who alleges embezzlement in stadium construction should differ from those of athletes who present complaints regarding doping or match-fixing.

The type of wrongdoing and the actors involved have an impact on the protection policies that can be afforded to them. It is important to involve a range of stakeholders in developing whistleblowing policies to identify potential risks in organisational structures and supply chains (in the case of contractors) (Henne 2015).

#### *Accessible and secure communication*

It is crucial that potential whistleblowers have access to secure ways to report information or to come forward as a witness of corrupt practices. SGBs must establish hotlines, digital inboxes or in-person offices where whistleblowers can not only come forward with information but also gain information regarding the protections and guarantees afforded to them as whistleblowers. It is important that the SGB provide legal counselling to non-professional athletes who may lack the resources to afford a lawyer if summoned to testify in criminal court or who may suffer legal

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<sup>1</sup> Spot betting refers to bets made on the basis of events occurring in a match, such as a particular player scoring or receiving a disciplinary action from an official.

retaliations (for example, for libel) from actors involved.

It is also important for whistleblowers to be able to provide information under anonymous or protected status if they fear direct retaliation for the claims they are making. SGB authorities should establish clear guidelines to determine if a whistleblower should first contact law enforcement to guarantee their personal safety before coming forward to the SGB.

Where SGBs have a decentralised governance structure, these points of contact must be afforded both at the decentralised, regional or local level, and at a central (national or international) level. One study of Australian greyhound racing recommends that establishing local representatives with knowledge of local realities could increase the amount of trainers who come forward (Masters & Graycar 2015). Furthermore, being able to bypass local, unprofessional authorities that may be involved in corruption and blow the whistle directly to a higher authority might also increase the chance of whistleblowers coming forward. Best practice stipulates that whistleblowers should have the choice to either go to an internal authority (in this case within their SGB) or to a dedicated and professional external body (like an anti-corruption authority or specific whistleblowing body) (Transparency International, 2018).

In all cases, regardless of the organisational structure of the SGB, special attention should be paid to establish whistleblowing channels that will interact and respond to whistleblowers in their native language. This is especially true of international SGBs who may operate in one language but govern sport in a multi-language area.

#### *Support and protection for whistleblowers*

It is important to provide whistleblowers with adequate support once they have blown the whistle on corrupt activities. In the case of SGB staff or whistleblowers of third parties, like construction companies, betting companies or professional teams, it is important to monitor whistleblowers to guarantee that they will not suffer retaliation for coming forward and, if some form of retaliation has occurred, to prosecute and remedy these aggressions. In the case of athletes that choose to blow the whistle, it is important to monitor their

performance, being wary of any on-field retribution they may suffer and offering counselling, both mental and physical, to counter the effects that whistleblowing may cause them.

In all cases, SGBs should adopt a zero tolerance policy to retaliation, whereby they act to sanction contractors, service providers, affiliated sports organisations, match officials or other athletes that act to punish whistleblowers for coming forward.

Furthermore, it is important for SGBs to consider direct contact with law enforcement to guarantee physical safety of whistleblowers if a specific complaint relates to organised crime or criminal elements. Guaranteeing legal protection for potential legal witnesses can facilitate legal processes.

One study by McGlynn & Richardson (2014) has shown that the negative effects that whistleblowing has on health and performance are nullified and productivity is improved if a whistleblower receives adequate support from their organisation.

#### *Ombudspersons and whistleblowing authorities*

SGBs and other actors in sports governance can establish dedicated, autonomous authorities, charged with receiving and acting on whistleblowing tips and claims. These authorities should be able to provide adequate support for potential whistleblowers to come forward and have direct contact with disciplinary bodies, high-level authorities and relevant law enforcement (or state sports authorities) to appropriately act on whistleblower information and to provide them adequate security.

Whistleblowing authorities should be autonomous units that are independent of political components of the organisation (Schenk 2016). These authorities should be equipped with the resources and the mandate to reach out to lower tiers of the organisation and to establish contact points with other associated actors (Dimeo 2016).

Sports whistleblowing authorities should periodically conduct studies to evaluate potential corruption risks within the sport. It is crucial that these studies take into account whistleblower security and guarantees to evaluate the state of whistleblower protection and to act to improve any deficiencies detected. In the same

spirit, whistleblowing authorities should be externally reviewed to guarantee that they are providing adequate support for whistleblowers and that they are perceived as a useful channel for members of the sport.

#### *Education and training*

The participation of non-professional, amateur and low tier governing bodies in major SGBs requires that education and training regarding proper whistleblower responses not be limited to high-level officials, but to all officials with decision-making capacity throughout the organisational hierarchy. Educating officials, coaching staff, athletes and even parents when youth leagues are concerned, about organisational codes of conduct and about whistleblower channels will increase their use and will reduce stigma around whistleblowing (Maesschalck & Vanden Auweele 2010; Whitaker et al. 2014). Regular reviews of education and training programmes should be conducted to guarantee that appropriate information about whistleblower channels is being transmitted.

The Do the Right Thing programme launched by the Asian Football Confederation proposes the establishment of helplines, channels through which potential whistleblowers can make queries about codes of conduct and organisational policies related to corruption (Asian Football Confederation 2016).

Furthermore, campaigns to increase awareness of whistleblower channels can increase the access and acceptance of these channels at all levels. A relevant example is that of the Staying on Side programme (detailed below).

#### *Team centred approaches*

Some scholars have considered the issue of esprit de corps as it relates to whistleblowing and propose that measured responses be taken against teams, clubs or other sports institutions that come forward in good faith to put an end to corrupt practices.

This, for example, would mean providing softer penalties on teams involved in match-fixing, for example, if they are willing to come forward with information useful to uncovering further abuses (Whitaker et al. 2014).

In working with the Asian Football Confederation on a whistleblowing programme, Transparency International made the important caveat that any potential “amnesty” granted to athletes or teams should only be granted in regard to football rules/regulations – not in regard to criminal/civil law (Asian Football Confederation 2016).

The purpose is, first, to encourage groups of whistleblowers to come forward together, thus providing more information that can be useful for investigations (Henne 2015). Second, it would benefit the first groups that come forward, thus increasing the risk of multi-group collusion, as the fear of the other party coming forward first would deter from colluding.

Third, coming forward first would essentially be “for the good of the team” and can be viewed as having the teams interests in mind (Masters & Graycar 2015).

### 3. EXAMPLES OF BEST PRACTICE FOR WHISTLEBLOWING IN SPORT

#### *TI Czech Republic*

Starting in 2015, the Czech Ice Hockey Federation partnered with the Czech chapter of Transparency International for the latter to provide a special internet and telephone hotline for athletes, staff and SGB officials who encounter corruption within the operations of the organisation. Transparency International Czechia provided anti-corruption training.

The arrangement between both organisations employs TI Czechia as a recipient of whistleblower disclosures and as a mediator between whistleblowers and the organisation (Kloboučková et al. 2016). As a third party, TI Czechia can assist whistleblowers in accessing responses from official institutions, and can work with the Federation to address problems in at-risk areas. TI Czechia employs strict procedures of professionalism and confidentiality, and offers services in both Czech and English.

The positive response from both the sports community as well as the Ice Hockey Federation led to further programmes by TI Czechia to promote whistleblowing in sport. In 2017, the organisation established a special helpdesk for all sport-based corruption

complaints in the Czech Republic. This helpdesk provides information regarding corruption in sport and legal counselling for whistleblowers who wish to come forward (Kloboučková et al. 2016).

#### *Asian Football Confederation*

In 2016, the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) launched the Do the Right Thing policy to provide a three-pronged approach to tackling corruption in sport and strengthening internal whistleblowing systems.

First, the policy establishes an Entry Control Body, which screens football associations for “direct and/or indirect involvement in any activity aimed at arranging or influencing the outcome of a match at the national or international level”, and considering those that screen positively as ineligible for participation for one football season (Asian Football Confederation 2018).

The second component of the plan was formalised in 2017, with the election of Independent Head of Integrity (IHI), a whistleblowing authority charged with investigating potential cases of match-fixing and sports crimes. Since its establishment, a digital, multiplatform hotline has been set up which can be used to contact the IHI.

The third component of the policy was a complete overhaul of the whistleblowing procedure within the SGB, to guarantee the IHI a central position in the reception of whistleblower complaints and disclosures so as to grant legal support and guidance to whistleblowers who choose to come forward. The procedure includes stipulations for disclosures that require intervention from law officials, as well as considerations for reviews and audits of the programme to ensure it continues operating in an appropriate manner.

#### *Staying on Side: German Football League (DFL)*

Starting in 2012, Transparency International Germany began working closely the German Football League (DFL) to address the problem of match-fixing in sport. The programme, called Staying on Side (Transparency International 2014), provided training on match-fixing to league officials, young athletes and coaching staff associated within the league. Progressively, training sessions addressed other anti-corruption topics such as integrity and fair play in

sport, the role of sponsors, sustainability in sport and anti-corruption activities like whistleblowing (Schenk 2016).

A direct result of this partnership was the appointment of a permanent joint ombudsperson on match-fixing in 2013 for the German Football League and the German Football Federation (DFB) (DFL 2017). The ombudsperson for German football has a dual role within both organisations: first, they must provide education and training to athletes, coaching staff and DFL and DSB staff. The ombudsperson, for example, launched a campaign entitled Tackle Match-Fixing – Play Fair! which provides brochures and digital platforms to young players to help them understand the problem of match-fixing and to understand how to speak out (German Football Association 2015).

As a secondary role, the ombudsperson supports whistleblowers by providing legal support and counsel, establishing permanent dialogue with high-level authorities to identify unethical behaviour (German Football Association 2015).

The programme was expanded in association with other Transparency International national chapters through a partnership with the Association of European Football Leagues (EPFL), which included the participation of representatives from Greece, Germany, Portugal, Italy and the United Kingdom. (Transparency International 2014)

#### *Romania: adapting sport to whistleblower legislation*

In 2004, Romania became one of the first countries in the EU to establish a whistleblower protection law. To adapt to the guidelines set up by the law, the Romanian Football Federation (FRF) established a multi-actor platform entitled Clean Football to allow staff, athletes and match officials to blow the whistle through institutional channels in accordance with the law (Grigore et al. 2018).

A notable practice employed by the FRF was the inclusion of a variety of external actors to promote, audit and evaluate the platform. Actors ranged from other SGBs like UEFA, to the private company Sport Integrity Monitor (Harrison 2015) and the not-for-profit project, Whistleblowing for Harmful Irregularities in Sport through Learning and Education, which was

financed by Erasmus Plus Sport (Grigore et al. 2018; Sportwhistle 2018).

#### *World Anti-Doping Association*

While the World Anti-Doping Association (WADA) only deals with the issues of corruption if these relate to doping and nobbing, the WADA itself presents a model to follow in terms of an international body advocated towards countering sports corruption.

The WADA operates in partnership with the International Olympic Committee but with guaranteed operational autonomy, with funding from a mix of state, private and SGB actors (Kayser et al. 2007). Beyond monitoring for doping in Olympic sport, it has implemented integrated whistleblowing systems, whereby athletes, coaching staff and officials can contact the WADA directly or sport or nation-specific contacts with disclosures about doping.

Calls have been made to establish an organisation similar to the WADA for sports crimes and match-fixing (Henne 2015).

#### 4. FURTHER READING

For further reading on corruption in Sport, see Transparency International's 2016 Global Corruption Report Available [here](#).

For further reading on whistleblowing, see the Transparency International's Anti-Corruption Helpdesk Topic Guide on Whistleblower Protection [here](#).

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