



Match Manipulation and Gambling: A Growing Threat to Canadian Sport Integrity

Executive Summary

**White Paper in Response to the
International Symposium on Match
Manipulation & Gambling in Sport
Toronto, Ontario
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McLaren Global Sport Solutions (MGSS)

Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (CCES)



Key Recommendations for Canada

The following recommendations are urgent, to mitigate the potential for match manipulation in Canada, and in so doing, to better protect the integrity and reputation of our sporting culture as well as the athletes who may be most vulnerable to corruption. Each is presented alongside an illustration of how the practice has been successfully implemented internationally.

- 1.** Establish a Federal Commission to examine the issue of match manipulation in Canadian Sport and to provide recommendations for action.
 - 1.1** It is recommended to establish the Terms of Reference and composition of the Commission members within 10 months of the issuance of this White Paper and to issue a Report of the Commission's findings within 18 months of establishing the Commission;
 - 1.2** The Commission should seek broad input including stakeholders representing Canadian sport (amateur and professional), provincial and territorial governments, Canadian gaming industry representatives and regulators, law enforcement agencies, private sport integrity companies, legal professionals, the general public and social service agencies responsible for harm reduction efforts related to gambling.

Review of Australia's Sports Integrity Arrangements (Wood Review)

- 2017 review spurred by growing threat of doping, illegal wagering, match fixing and organized crime.
- 280-page final report found that "Without the presence of a comprehensive, effective and nationally coordinated response capability, the hard-earned reputation of sport in this country risks being tarnished, along with a potential reduction in participation rates and a diminution in the social, cultural and economic value of Australia's significant investment in sport."
- Conducted by James Wood, former judge of the Supreme Court of New South Wales and former Chairperson of the Law Reform Commission of New South Wales.
- Key recommendations included becoming a signatory to the Macolin Convention, establishment of Sport Integrity Australia, regulation of sports wagering, sport wagering fraud detection and response capability, and greater international connectivity.

All other recommendations that follow should be considered within the scope and framework of the first recommendation, and implemented in accordance with the Report of this Commission.

- 2.** Canada should become a signatory to the Council of Europe Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions (the "Macolin Convention").

The Macolin Convention

- Multilateral treaty that aims to prevent, detect, and punish match fixing in sport.
- Introduced in Switzerland in 2014, ratified by five countries. 37 signatories, NOT including Canada.
- Only rule of international law on the subject.
- Non-European countries encouraged to ratify.
- Common definitions and international co-operation mechanisms.

3. A review of relevant sections of Canadian Criminal Code should be undertaken including amendments to address the prosecution of corrupt practises focussed specifically on match manipulation in Canadian sport.

German Criminal Code Revisions

- Triggered by a high-profile case of match-fixing in German football in 2005.
- No specific provisions in Canada’s Criminal Code to prevent match fixing, and no mention of offshore sports betting.
- “The biggest threat to sport integrity is organized crime...the bad guys involved in pushing dope and steroids are the same bad guys involved in match manipulation.” – David Howman, former WADA director general.

4. Enhanced efforts to educate and inform athletes, coaches, officials, and sport organizations about the risks associated with match fixing in sport.

International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF)

- Code of Conduct prohibits conduct leading to match manipulation, and can enforce and sanction.
- Partnership with Sportradar to monitor flagship tournaments for suspicious betting patterns.
- Recent investigations have yielded a life ban to two Ukranian players related to match manipulation.
- Amateur and professional athletes who earn low incomes are particularly vulnerable.

5. Creation of an independent Sport Integrity Unit in Canada.

Sports Betting Intelligence Unit, Great Britain

- Operational hub as set out in Macolin Convention.
- Born of recommendations of a panel of stakeholders from the betting industry, law enforcement, players, fans, sports organizations, the legal profession and government.
- Collects and analyzes intelligence relating to potentially criminal activity in sports betting, coordinates intelligence efforts, protects sports betting from corruption, develops resources.

Tennis Integrity Unit

- Established in 2008, widely regarded as one of the best models of anti-corruption governance in sport.
- Independent body that enforces rules related to betting-related corruption in professional tennis, funded by seven of the sport’s major stakeholders.
- Priorities are prevention, investigation, education.

Understanding Match Fixing

Match-fixing involves the deliberate and coordinated influence of the outcome of a sporting contest typically involving a player, game official, coach, or other staff official who has been compromised through the influence of another party. The influence comes in the form of financial bribes, or as physical or other threats. Other individuals will then typically wager unusually large sums on a particular outcome of the manipulated event due to prior knowledge of the corrupt actions.

Match-fixing is a global threat, often linked to gambling and organized crime, although regulated gambling markets can also be subject to betting-related fraud. Compared to unregulated betting markets in which bookmakers operate with limited oversight, regulated markets provide better opportunities to monitor and address issues related to match manipulation.

This practice threatens the integrity of sport in several ways:

- The absence of unpredictability can devastate a sport by breaking the public trust. Declan Hill warns that match-fixing has destroyed many sports across Asia, and the wave of corruption is lapping at the doors of North American sports.
- The issue is more acute in lower-tier leagues and events where athletes earn less money and are more vulnerable to bribes. Criminal fixers target athletes and exploit their vulnerabilities to compel them to go along with a fix.
- Legal sports betting (online and single sport) is increasingly popular across the US with new regulations, and is an important source of income for sport. A public who loses trust in the integrity of the system may choose to not bet on events.
- Research shows that a fan who bets on a sport is typically more engaged with the sport, thus fans driven away from betting on a sport because of match fixing may also be less inclined to watch the sport.

The International Symposium on Match Manipulation and Gambling in Sport was held in Toronto on April 24 & 25, 2019, jointly organized by the CCES and MGSS. Its purpose was to raise awareness of this issue among key stakeholders in sport in Canada, including amateur and professional sport organizations, athletes, government agencies, law enforcement, gambling industry representatives, researchers, and the legal community.

Canadian Sports at Risk

In 2019, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (CCES) commissioned leading sports data, betting and integrity service provider Sportradar to assess risks related to match manipulation in Canada. Sportradar estimates that the global wagers placed on Canadian sporting competitions each year amount to nearly C\$20 billion. Based on the current regulatory climate, many Canadian sports can expect to see wagering increase. The amount of betting on a sport is one of the most important underlying variables related to a sport's risk profile.

Match fixing in Canada received international attention in 2012 when CBC's The National alleged that a player in the Canadian Soccer League (CSL) accepted a bribe to fix a match in 2009. It was eventually revealed that the entire CSL was affected, including all 12 clubs, and the manipulation of as many as 42% of games in the league. A 2015 article in The Telegraph exposed a "rogue league corrupted by match fixing."

In the wake of the CSL crisis, Canada Soccer, in partnership with FIFA and Interpol, held a meeting prior to the 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup hosted by Canada. The purpose was to "support stakeholders (to) operate in a coordinated manner, especially at national level, to ensure a comprehensive and unified approach to both the prevention of match fixing and responses to allegations of match fixing."

Other organizations represented at this meeting included The Confederation of North, Central American and Caribbean Association Football (CONCACAF), RCMP, OPP, Canadian Gaming Association, Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, Canada Border Services, and the Ministry of Sport.

Since then, there has been no progress in the development of a national coordinated framework to prevent match fixing, nor movement towards becoming a signatory to the Macolin Convention.

This threat has the potential to cause severe damage to the integrity of Canada's most beloved sports. With Canada's co-hosting of the United 2026 FIFA World Cup, it is urgent for government to address this issue or risk reputational damage. While Canada is now regarded as a leader in the global anti-doping movement, we must now take a more proactive stance regarding match manipulation.