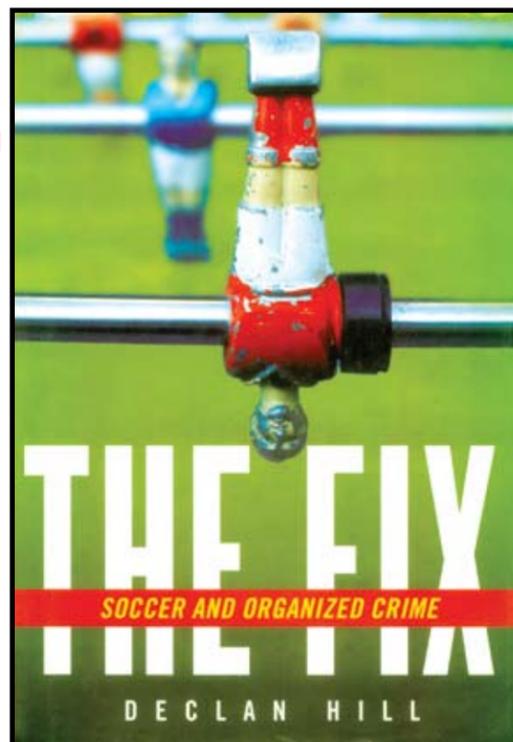


'INDIAN BOOKIES ARE VERY MUCH INVOLVED IN FOOTBALL BETTING'

Declan Hill, author of *The Fix*, a book on 'Soccer And Organised Crime', talks to All Sports Magazine about match-fixing around the world.



DECLAN HILL

Canadian investigative journalist Declan Hill, who has been researching the links between sport and organised crime over the years, has written the definitive book, *The Fix*, about match-fixing in football at all levels, including the Olympics and the World Cup. The Oxford scholar, who imbibed his love for football during his youth in Old Blighty, did his doctorate in match fixing in professional football.

Hill is not the first journalist to write about match fixing in football; renowned football writer Brian Glanville, for example, has done some seminal work by exposing "a network of corruption among Italian fixers and European referees."

But Hill has traversed the entire distance, crisscrossing continents, interviewing cops, players, managers, football officials, alleged match fixers and bookies as he attempts to uncover the *modus operandi* of match fixing and the identity of the match fixers, especially in the multi-billion dollar illegal Asian gambling industry, often putting his life at grave risk in the process.

Hill's most astounding discovery is that gambling fixers have infiltrated the game at all levels – all the way to the top international matches in the Olympics, Champions League and World Cup (both for men and women). That he has lived to tell the tale is a tribute to his ingenuity and enterprise.

In this exclusive interview with *All Sports Magazine*, Hill offers his opinion on the state of the global game vis-à-vis the match fixing scourge and also the Indian connections in the football betting landscape.

All Sports Magazine: Match-fixing scandals have rocked the major leagues and tournaments in Europe, Latin America, Asia and Africa over the past 15 years. Is the menace less prevalent now or is it business as usual for the match-fixing mafias?

Declan Hill: What has occurred in the last few years is that globalisation has come to match-fixing. It used to be that criminals in each country might fix a match. Now the fixers will corrupt a match in one country, but actually bet on it in a gambling market thousands of miles away. It makes it very difficult to detect.

ASM: Have the football authorities worldwide like FIFA, UEFA, AFC and the national FAs woken up to the scourge of match-fixing and are they doing enough to prevent it?

DH: It depends on the organisation, but in general Football Associations have not risen to the challenge. One example: In every single North American sports league – the NBA, NFL, NHL, etc – there is a special security department full of tough former police officers. These departments are well-resourced and can gather information about potential corruption. Strangely, no football association in the world has anything equivalent. It is like running a sweet shop without a door.

ASM: Nothing is too big to touch for the match-fixing mafias – be it World Cup, Champions League, Olympics etc. Is the penetration of the underworld into big time football complete?

DH: No, you have to be careful. It is not in every game in every tournament. Rather, it is that the fixers believe that they can get to some players in every tournament.

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ASM: In your book you claim that the Asian mafias (mostly Chinese and based in East Asia) have muscled their way into Europe. Are they the dominant force in fixing big matches there, or are there also other mafias involved in a big way?

DH: There are lots of different gangs involved in match-fixing. Very often, you hear about links between gangs. Some will approach the players, others will fix the gambling market. They are working together across borders. It really is the globalisation of crime.

ASM: Indian bookies were at the nerve centre of the cricket match-fixing scandal that raged a few years ago. Do you think Indian bookies are active in football?

DH: Yes, Indian bookies are very much involved in the football betting market (as during the World Cup).

ASM: Is there a danger of Indian bookies getting into football match-fixing now that television viewers of English Premier League, Champions League and other European leagues has grown by leaps and bounds here?

DH: Of course. There is a fair amount of racism around this subject. Europeans simply will not believe that Asian criminals can be that effective. Yet, both the best fixers and policemen against fixing come from the Indian sub-continent. If you look at the work of the Indian CID, it is actually far better than the UK police force in their anti-corruption work in cricket. So too is the work of Asian fixers. Leaving morality aside, many of them are geniuses.

ASM: Finally, is there hope for the 'beautiful game' to regain its purity or is all hope lost?

DH: There are very simple remedies to prevent widespread match-fixing. Security departments should be established; hotlines for whistleblowers set up; more women referees promoted – readers of my book will understand why this is important. There are lots of things that can be done by the Football Associations. They have the money and resources. Match-fixing in football should be stopped. It can be stopped. It must be stopped. **ESM**

– Mario Rodrigues