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## The Fix: Soccer and Organized Crime

Declan Hill

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# THE FIX

*SOCCER AND ORGANIZED CRIME*

DECLAN HILL



McCLELLAND & STEWART

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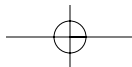
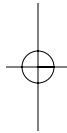
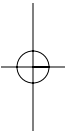
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*To Mum, for teaching “never give up”  
even when my team was losing 8-0.*



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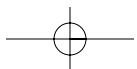
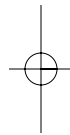
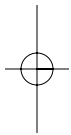
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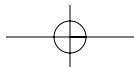
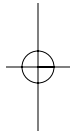
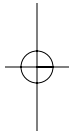
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## NOTE ABOUT LANGUAGE

The cultural gap between Europe and North America is never bigger than when discussing the world's most popular sport. To Europeans, the sport is football and there is no other possible word. To North Americans, football is what men with shoulder pads, tight pants, and helmets play and the other sport is called soccer. In this book, I have tried to be consistent and call the sport soccer wherever possible. However, there are certain proper names – European Football Associations, FIFA, UEFA, etc. – where the word *football* is necessary. I have also not changed the interview excerpts: if a person used *football* or *soccer* I have kept the original usages. I have included certain words that are part of the universal language and lore of soccer. Most North Americans play soccer games or matches on either a field or a pitch. I hope the reader will understand when I use both.



*This story is about the battle between good and evil that is at the heart of international soccer.*

*Emmanuel Petit, World Cup-winning French midfielder.*

It begins with a murder. Actually, it begins with two gruesome, bloody murders. On August 9, 2008, in the northern English town of Newcastle, the bodies of Kevin Zhen Xing Yang, and his girlfriend, Cici Xi Zhou, were discovered in a small flat near the city centre. Yang and Zhou had not simply been killed but tortured for hours before their deaths: his throat was slashed, her head smashed in three places. The police were mystified. The couple seemed to be popular. They had lots of friends and no apparent enemies. The case seemed unsolvable, until the police discovered Yang's real career. He was not, as he had told immigration authorities, a graduate student, but part of an international gambling ring. Yang's job was to organize other young Chinese living in the UK to monitor British soccer games for the multi-billion-dollar illegal Asian gambling market. They would go to the stadiums, watch the games, and provide live commentary on their mobile phones back to Asia. It was a clear, simple and very well-rewarded task, but somewhere, somehow, Yang decided to betray his employers.

When the mob decides to kill, what they do with their victims' bodies sends a clear signal to the rest of the world. Most people disappear, ending up in anonymous cement holes or piles of acid-made dust dumped into a harbour. But for traitors and betrayers there must be a public demonstration of the power of the mob. Yang and Zhou got made into a message. Their mutilated bodies were symbols of what happens to those who betray a powerful, criminal industry.

English police caught a man who had been at the house. He had blood on his clothes and Yang's watch and computer. His defense was that he was simply renting a room in their apartment. He had been forced to open the door to the murderers and was tied up, terrified, in the bathroom while the torture and murders were going on. Despite

this story, the authorities sentenced him to thirty-three years in jail, but no one, not the police, not the judge, not the victims' families thought he was the brains behind the killings nor that he had acted alone. The judge said at the trial that he thought the defendant was too frightened to reveal who the other killers had been. To announce this finding, the English police held a public press conference. It was largely ignored in their own country and in the rest of Europe. However, it was broadcast live to China. There, an estimated *five hundred million* people tuned in to watch the event, or five times the number who watched the 2008 Super Bowl.

Kevin Yang, Cici Zhou, and their murderers are part of an international revolution. A global phenomenon of gambling and match-fixing that is transforming societies and destroying sports around the world. Many of the leagues in Asia, where it started, and Eastern Europe, have effectively collapsed because of this corruption. Now, the fixers are coming to Western Europe and North America and they are fixing hundreds of games.

A reader might be thinking, "Say what!? A multi-billion-dollar illegal gambling market? Five hundred million people watching what? Hundreds of fixed matches? This is too much!" I would not blame you if you did think that. When I began my research seven years ago, I knew little of this industry or its power. I was extraordinarily skeptical. This book is a record of what I discovered. It will explain to you how the industry functions and why the fixers have been so successful. You will read about hundreds of fixed matches in dozens of different countries around the world. You will read about pistol whippings, kidnappings, and murders. You will read about the good men who have tried to fight against this tide of corruption and how they have often been marginalized, sacked, imprisoned, or killed.

In short, you will read about the two greatest scandals in world sports today. You will read that there is a gang of fixers linked to organized criminals who have fixed some matches at the biggest sports tournaments in the world.

There has been a major European police investigation motivated, in part, by the first edition of *The Fix* and the controversy generated by the book. The investigation was launched by the organized crime team of the Federal Police in Bochum, Germany. The

detectives listened to thousands of hours of covertly recorded telephone conversations. They placed dozens of people under surveillance and worked around the clock to try to uncover the true extent of the fixing network. After more than a year of this work, at exactly 6:24 a.m., on a cold November morning in 2009, hundreds of policemen across Europe moved in and arrested dozens of suspects. Over the next few days, they announced the preliminary findings of their work: two hundred suspicious matches across nine countries, and one hundred different players, referees, coaches, league officials, and gangsters were suspected of being involved. Over the ensuing weeks, the number of suspicious games and players involved climbed. It was a new type of globalized corruption that stretched across countries and continents: a fixer living in Germany, allegedly controlling players living in Switzerland, Turkey or Greece, defrauding the illegal gambling markets in Hong Kong and Malaysia with the help of assistants in London and Holland.

This book introduces you to some of the key fixers and shows you how they operate. You will read in Chapter 8 about a fixer from China who in 2004 moved to Belgium. He was helped by a local Sicilian businessman and he fixed dozens games over the next year in the Belgian top division. You will read in Chapter 11 about the depth of corruption in the Turkish league, how both players and club officials there were involved in numerous cases of match-fixing. In Chapter 12, you will read about the Sapina brothers, two Croatians living in Germany, who fixed a number of matches in the German leagues. In Chapter 14, you will read about William Lim, a Malaysian-Chinese, who in 2007 was convicted of fixing games in Austria. From Chapter 16 on, you will meet Lee Chin, a gangster-fixer living in Bangkok, who claims to have fixed dozens of high-level matches.

Here is the headline: they are – according to the German police investigation – connected. Most of them know each other and phoned each other regularly. According to the prosecution report, and this has been untested in court, Sapina's good friend and business partner was a fellow-Croat living in Nuremburg who was heard on secret surveillance tape talking about William Lim as "his good friend." They even phoned Lim in his secret hideout in Europe. There is other evidence of the linkages between these convicted fixers. For example, in Lim's copious police files and phone records, marked VNR

ST/1528209/2005, there is a sheet of paper with the Belgian fixer's phone number and the name of a well-known fixed match written on it. I want to stress that this is not a well-ordered criminal conspiracy. They do not have a strict hierarchy and clear structure. There is no Capo or boss of bosses ordering the rest of them around. It is simply a group of criminals and alleged criminals doing what they do: sometimes colluding, sometimes competing with each other, but always looking for the next chance to profit by fixing a soccer game.

Here is a second headline, and this strangely has not yet motivated a major police investigation: a similar gang of fixers has been operating at every single major international soccer tournament for at least the last twenty years. As you will read in this book, their record has been confirmed by dozens of different players, coaches, and senior sporting officials. These fixers have been present at the Under-17 World Cup, the Under-20 World Cup, the Olympic soccer tournament, the Women's World Cup, and the Men's World Cups. I believe they have successfully fixed matches at a very high level of international soccer.

\*\*

When *The Fix* was first published in September 2008, there was a big push-back against my findings. Much of that push-back was innocent. Many fans simply did not want to know bad news. It is like a patient hearing from a doctor that they have cancer. It is easier, in some cases, to deny reality than to admit what is actually going on. Now that the European police investigation is confirming much of what is written in this book, some fans are proceeding from denial to resignation, without going through combat. They are saying things like, "Well, it is only the small games in small leagues from small countries that are involved." This is the attitude of the deliberately blind. It also avoids the question, What happens in five years? Star players do not emerge fully grown from the ground. Many players on big teams in the big leagues come from the very teams and leagues that have now been shown to be corrupt.

Strangely the attitude of deliberate ignorance does not stop with ordinary soccer fans; the push-back goes all the way to many top-level soccer officials. This is why I wrote earlier of the two greatest scandals in the sports world today. The first scandal is that gangs of criminals have been so successful at destroying so many soccer leagues and tournaments. The second scandal is that many sports officials, in charge of running those tournaments, have known of the presence of these fixers and chosen to take very little effective action against them. I am not saying that all games in all leagues should be suspected, nor am I saying that all sports officials are corrupt or have chosen to be complicit with corruption. The world of international sports organizations is a house with many rooms: most people in most of those rooms are hard-working, honest, decent people. However, many officials simply do not want to know what is really going on.

This may seem extraordinary to a reader. Surely, everyone connected would want to stop corruption? However, some of the very top officials, the ones in charge of leading the organizations have some very odd backgrounds. There is, for example, Grigori Surkis. In 1995, he was the president of Dynamo Kiev, the top team in the Ukraine at the time. Dynamo was thrown out of the Champions League, when some of its officials tried to bribe the Spanish referee for an upcoming game with fur coats. Two of Dynamo's administrators were banned for life from the sport: Vasiliy Babiychuk, the general secretary of Dynamo, and Igor Surkis, Grigori's brother and a board member of the club. A number of UEFA officials told me that after they made this decision they had to receive police protection. They were members of the Ukrainian mafia, presumably unconnected with the club, who were such devoted fans of Dynamo Kiev that they were going to kill the UEFA officials. A few months later, UEFA changed its decision and Dynamo Kiev was allowed back into the competition the next year and the bans against Igor Surkis and Babiychuk were overturned. Igor Surkis has subsequently become president of Dynamo Kiev. However, in 2004, Grigori Surkis was officially banned from entering the United States for corruption and falsifying election results. Surkis claimed in an Ukrainian newspaper that the American charges "do not correspond with reality." Certainly, they have not hindered



his rise in the Ukraine where he is now both a politician and President of the Ukrainian Football Federation. Nor have they hindered him in the world of international soccer, for also in 2004, he was appointed to sit on the Executive Committee of UEFA – the board that runs the organization that runs all of European soccer.

Another football association, another room. Since the publication of this book I have been asked by a number of European soccer officials to consult for their organizations. At best, the officials want to discuss how to put in place measures to stop match-corruption. There are lots of ways to do this – more women and professional referees, better pensions and education benefits for players, an integrity unit in each soccer association made up of ex-policemen. All of these things are relatively easy to do and many soccer officials are often ready and willing to listen to the ideas.

However, at worst, the officials actually want to know who my sources are and how to get hold of them. Last year, I had a meeting with two prominent European soccer officials in a café that was one of those types of meetings. We spoke at length, and I told them that, like all good researchers, I would never reveal my sources. It is a principle of trust. One of the executives is a very honest and decent man. His colleague, who is from a European area renowned for organized crime, had a different attitude towards corruption than his colleague. He said, “Maybe the best way to deal with corruption is to bury it. Deny it exists. If too many people start to doubt the sport, what can we do?”

At one point, the first executive excused himself and went to the bathroom. When he was gone, the second executive leaned across the table and said, “You spoke about trust at the beginning of our conversation. Well it also works the other way. In my home city I have lots of friends, of the type that you know. If you fuck us over, they will fuck you over, you understand?” There was a slight pause and then he laughed. I said, “Oh really? Well maybe your people should speak to my people.” And then we both laughed. When the other executive came back neither of us said a word about this conversation and they left soon afterwards.

A final note.

You will understand that the research for this book has been dangerous. For that reason I have held back certain names, dates, and other information. After the publication, I placed complete files with two different lawyers in two different countries. I gave them specific instructions, if anything were to happen to me, that they should release *all* the details. I did this for my family and for my own protection. I hope you will never read those files. I hope that this book will do. I hope it will be enough to change the sport for good, forever.

## INTRODUCTION

### THE BIRDS OF PREY

*July 17, 1994, was a hot, sunny Californian day. In the Rose Bowl, Pasadena, over 90,000 spectators had jammed themselves in to watch the final of the World Cup. On the field, the Italian and Brazilian national teams would fight it out for soccer supremacy, and a worldwide television audience estimated at more than two billion people watched them. Meanwhile, in the VIP section sat the cream of international society. Pelé, the man who had been the world's best and most popular player, mingled among celebrities and political leaders such as Al Gore and Henry Kissinger. But in the box sat someone with a more controversial background – Anzor Kikalishvili. A U.S. Congressional inquiry and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) would both name him as one of the top mobsters of Russian organized crime. He had been a communist government functionary, but after the collapse of the Soviet Union, he became the president of an organization: the 21st Century Association. The 21st Century Association had bad luck with its presidents. Its last chief executive had been killed by a sniper's bullet. The one before that had been murdered in a mafia shoot-out. 21st Century was reputed to offer protection (or "krisha") to the other Russian "mafiyas" who offered krisha to the rest of the country. A month after the World Cup Final, an FBI investigation – attempting to stop Kikalishvili's steady incursion into Florida – had wiretapped him threatening to skin a Florida couple like animals. None of the FBI investigators doubted his threats.*

*Anzor Kikalishvili probably felt quite comfortable with some of the other guests in the section that afternoon. At the centre of the box was João*

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*Havelange, then head of the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA). He had been named in 1994 by a Brazilian district attorney for his connections with “the country’s most notorious capo,” one Castor de Andrade, the head of an illegal gambling network estimated at \$2.6 billion. A man who also had, according to Brazilian law enforcement, connections with top Colombian drug gangs. Near to him sat Vyacheslav Koloskov, then president of the Russian Football Union, an organization plagued by the problem of mafiya contract killings. Juan José Bellini, the president of the Colombian Football Federation, was not there. He could not make it that afternoon: one of the players on the Colombian team had been gunned down soon after returning from the World Cup. A year later, Bellini would be convicted of “illegal enrichment” and money laundering for the Cali cartel. FIFA is the world organization that runs soccer. All of these men were either members of FIFA or were guests at the biggest showcase of soccer in the world.*

*I met Anzor Kikalishvili in a Georgian restaurant in Moscow in the winter of 1999. He told me the story of how he had enjoyed watching the 1994 World Cup Final and how he loved sports, particularly soccer. I was there as an associate producer on a television documentary for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) that was later broadcast for the American program Frontline. Since the 1994 World Cup, Kikalishvili had been banned from entering the United States, and he wanted to impress us as a reasonable and civilized man. He took us for dinner at a tiny restaurant. It was, like a lot of Moscow at the time, slightly surreal. The front section of the restaurant was full of English construction workers who had been flown into Moscow to work on a building project. Why one would fly English workers into Russia, a country with high unemployment and low wages, was never explained. They were drinking pints of lager and rapidly getting drunk. Behind their section was a narrow hallway that led to an expensive restaurant. It was beautifully decorated and served exquisite Georgian food. Kikalishvili arrived late; his armour-plated 4 x 4 mounting the pavement*

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*and stopping three feet from the restaurant door. A very large, muscular guard in a designer suit stood in front of the door. Two more men were in the tiny hallway. I know this because when I got up to go outside and check on our driver, they would not let me leave without a nod from Kikalishvili. There were no other exits from the room. The food was excellent, the wine plentiful, and Kikalishvili a very good host. However, Kikalishvili's security precautions were probably a good idea. A few weeks after our visit, his offices near the Kremlin were blown up in a bomb attack. Kikalishvili was unhurt, which is more than can be said for the heavily damaged building.*

*The research for the television documentary was interesting. The program was based on the revelations of a freelance journalist, Robert Friedman, who had shown the connections between Russian mobsters and players in the National Hockey League. He had also had a contract put on him by some of the same Russian mobsters. Although one U.S. Senate investigator estimated that more than 80 per cent of hockey players were paying protection money to mobsters, the connections were often deeper: they were about friendships, business, or political ambitions. Pavel Bure, for example, was a great hockey player, but also a kind of male Anna Kournikova, a high-profile pin-up boy who enjoyed wide popularity on both sides of the Atlantic. He was, as well, Anzor Kikalishvili's political protégé, and when we visited Moscow, there were posters across the city of the two men together, campaigning for the 21st Century Association. Other major hockey players were helping mobsters with their immigration requirements or their business activities or just hanging out as friends.*

*What stunned me was that so few people actually seemed to mind the presence of so many organized crime figures in a sport. I went to interview a top Russian player, one of the most influential players in the league. He had been linked to mobsters by sources at the FBI. As I was leaving to meet him, one of my bosses came out of his office and spoke to me about the meeting. He did not want to know the player's views on the mafia or the possibility of games being fixed or even some of his potential connections. Rather, my boss asked me to inquire about his play in a recent play-off game. I was struck by this incident. Here was a seasoned, cynical journalist*

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*who knew the essential structure of the story, but even he was dazzled by the thought of meeting, albeit indirectly, a top player. It made me realize the power and ability of sports players to airbrush the images of even the most unsavory characters. After the investigation, I worked on other organized crime stories. But as I did so, I could not help my mind turning over the question: if a relatively low-profile sport like hockey could sanitize mobsters, would the same be true for international soccer?*

*I was raised in England, so soccer was my sport. I love the game with a love and desire that is almost unexplainable except to other lovers. My first experience came in one of those moments that change your life. I was in primary school and a gang of classmates came up to me and asked which team I liked better, Arsenal or Liverpool? I was six. I had heard of neither team, but I thought that Arsenal was such a ridiculous name that they must be the weaker, underdog team, so I chose them. It was a decision, casually made, that has been impossible to alter. I read once of a soccer fan who said, "You can be a lousy father, you can divorce your wife, you can move countries, but you can never change your soccer team." So it has proven with me. For most of my childhood and adult years, I loathed everything about Arsenal. Their style was unpardonably ugly. They delighted in kicking great lumps out of their opponents and then kicking the ball far down the pitch. They had no technique, no skill, and no verve. Worse, I discovered that, unlike a genuine underdog team, they were rich. They could have played with panache and flair. But instead under a range of different managers they played as thugs. Not much good it did me. Like a man in love with a faithless woman, I discovered I was powerless to change a decision of my heart. Years were spent, until the arrival of Arsène Wenger, watching Arsenal kick, thump, and intimidate their way to victory.*

*I also played for years, but I was never a particularly good player. Every season I would play superbly for about half an hour. In that half an hour, I would fly across the pitch. Whatever skills, stamina, speed I had would all unite in one brief moment of injury-free bliss. The memories of those half-hours would keep me warm in the winter. They would keep me playing in dozens of games, when I did nothing of note. They would keep me turning*

## INTRODUCTION

*up at the start of new seasons ready to enjoy my half-hour of soccer heaven. So I do not have racks of medals or trophies. But I do have good memories and great friends given to me by the beautiful game. It is for those memories and loves that I decided to use my investigative skills to give back something to the game that has given me so much.*

*It is easier to write a book with the weight of a large institution behind you than as a freelance writer. So I enrolled as a doctoral student at the University of Oxford. It was a place I had dreamed of going for most of my life. It is glorious: full of interesting history, superb buildings, and great resources. My first year there was, probably, the happiest of my life. However, it was not a complete dream, and I have a great dislike of those books about Oxford whose authors describe it all as glamour, glory, and glittering prizes. There are plenty of little people in the big buildings there. But I do owe the university a large debt of gratitude. The teachers, tutors, and supervisors, for the most part, did something almost unknown in the academic world: they left me alone. They made it clear that they were ready to chat if I needed any help, but then they figuratively nodded at the books and all the resources of the university and told me to get on with it.*

*My college, Green, was a scholar's dream: a small, protective enclave full of fascinating people. It even has an eighteenth-century observatory at its centre, surrounded by a garden perpetually in bloom. I loved my life there. I joined Green's rowing team. One of my teammates spoke eighteen languages (no, I didn't believe him either, until I heard him speak them all); another was a graduate student/computer hacker/CEO of a computer company that had invented a new form of Internet money (no, I don't know when he slept either); another one has graduated to running six-day marathons in the Sahara Desert; and the rest were simply medical students or Fulbright Scholars. I ended my time at the university working with the type of man that I thought had disappeared with the death of David Niven or Rex Harrison – a true English gentleman. His name is Anthony Heath. He was the chairman of the Sociology Department. We would meet in his book-lined office and our discussions of the work were usually conducted over cups of tea, but Heath's beautifully gentle manner hides a tough, rigorous*

## THE FIX

*mind and an athlete's past. He has done a range of interesting work, from exploring class and education in the U.K. to designing political surveys in current-day Iraq. He guided me through the difficulties of completing a doctorate at Oxford, and I will forever be grateful to him for his graciousness and intelligence.*

*But I did not work simply as an academic. I also used the skills that I had developed as an investigative journalist. I interviewed people who had been involved in the game. It may seem odd, but very few journalists have tried to speak to people inside soccer about the presence of organized crime in the game. This is partly to do with the role of sports journalists. Sports journalists are often intelligent, hard-working, principled people. However, they have a job to do, and that job is to report on the results of not one particular game but on every single game, week after week, season after season. This means that they depend on the club or league officials to get them access to the matches and players. It means that if they discover something scandalous, they have to weigh up an odd dilemma: do I reveal the scandal and thereby potentially lose my access, or do I keep quiet and keep my job easy? For me, there was no dilemma. I did not care about the results of the game. I was not interested in securing long-term access to players. I just wanted to understand the truth of what was going on inside the sport. Ironically, people were often very interested in speaking to me, because no one had contacted them before and they desperately wanted to speak out about the corruption in the sport.*

*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*



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*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.*

## THE FIX

*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).*

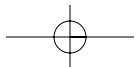
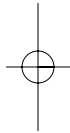
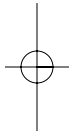
*My views on soccer have changed. I still love the Saturday-morning game between amateurs: the camaraderie and the fresh smell of grass. But the professional game leaves me cold. I hope you will understand why after reading the book. I think you may never look at sport in the same way again.*



# ASIA

THE STORM CLOUDS

*PART I*



## PROLOGUE

Raul Hernandez (\*) was at one time one of the most promising young players in the world. I interviewed him in Singapore on the night of a Champions League game. European games start at two or three o'clock in the morning Singapore time, so after the interview we sat up long into the night to watch the match. In the interview and conversation, Hernandez seemed very honest. He had spoken about his problems adapting to a lifestyle of fame and status. He had become a drug addict, got divorced, and eventually dropped out of the game. But now with his parents' help, he had turned his life around. Hernandez remarried, became a publicly professed Christian, and re-entered soccer.

He told me he had taken part in fixed matches where his team's manager or owner had bribed players on the opposing team. But he claimed he had never taken a bribe or had anything to do with gambling in his life.

The next day we met for coffee. He had been playing for his club and had received no salary. The owner had simply refused to pay him.

But he had a surprise for me.

As we drank our coffees and chatted about the game the night before, he leaned forward and said, "You know a lot of these fixers, don't you?"

"Well, I have interviewed some of them, yes," I replied.

"Give me one of their phone numbers."