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The Big Fix: The Hunt For The Match-Fixers Bringing Down Soccer



Synopsis

Can the most beloved sport in the world beat the corruption that threatens to tear it apart? Known as the "beautiful game", soccer is the world's most popular sport, crossing borders and language barriers to entertain billions. But underneath it all - the raucous fans in the stadiums; the beloved players; and FIFA, the international governing body with a membership of 209 national associations - is a scandal that threatens to make soccer the ugliest sport in the world. An underworld of international gambling rings, corrupt players and officials, and shadowy figures preys on the far-flung edges of the game, making match-fixing in soccer one of organized crime's new, profitable businesses. Now, for the first time, journalist Brett Forrest takes us inside the \$700 billion international soccer betting market. Forrest pulls back the curtain, exposing a web of nefarious dealings across the world, even on U.S. soil, with opportunistic fixers bribing players, influencing officials, and staging fake matchups, while Asian criminal syndicates pull the strings. No match is safe - not even the World Cup tournament - especially while local law-enforcement officials lack the resources and the will to investigate. But one man has taken on this criminal enterprise: Chris Eaton, a hardheaded Australian, longtime Interpol director, and the former head of security for FIFA. Forrest follows Eaton's journey from local beat cop to FIFA's security chief for the 2010 World Cup in South Africa. Filled with headline-making revelations, *The Big Fix* is a must-hear for soccer fans and true-crime aficionados. The story brings us inside Chris Eaton's hunt for the world's biggest fixers and their backers - from the roots of fixing in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, to FIFA headquarters in Zurich and World Cup preparation in South Africa and Qatar, to fixing's expansion into nearly every country in the world - and the fight to save the beautiful game.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I found myself at Square Two after wading through the book's 280 pages. There should probably be at least another two squares, maybe a half dozen more to reach the end of the journey if, in fact, there is one. One of the book's characters, the real "good guy," alludes to what may be the author's conclusion: that the problem will always be with us, that there is no end to match-fixing. If the whole idea may be to write a sequel which wraps up the criminal activity associated with the world's most popular sport, I will await other reviewers commentary before I buy it. I was expecting a lot more from this book. If you don't already have a good handle on betting, odds-making and gambling terminology in general, this book is likely to leave you wondering what you just read and whether it was worth the time it took to read it. Unfortunately, I fit both categories since I've never been a gambler or associated with any. If you already know a lot about basket weaving, I suggest you spend the hours you might have spent with this book reading more about basket weaving.

Sometimes you come across a book that changes the way you look at things. The Big Fix is one of those books; a work of non-fiction but as enthralling and shocking as a thriller. It's got all the elements of a great tale, and it shows us a world of corruption right in front of our eyes. Massive money, massive crime, a hell of a good read. If you don't care about soccer, you'll enjoy reading about the thrill of the chase after massive crime syndicates. If you do care about soccer, you'll might not watch the World Cup with the same eyes or look at the game the say way again. Either way, you'll enjoy it.

I'm impressed how the author Brett Forrest was able to deliver a page-turning tale about an extremely complicated set of international characters and circumstances. It had me from the first page and left me wondering what will ever become of the worlds most popular sport if the good guys don't take it back. And soon.

This excellent piece of investigatory journalism from ESPN The Magazine's Senior Writer Brett Forrest takes us inside the shocking world of international football (i.e., soccer) match-fixing. There are two main threads of the story: that of the main chaser, Chris Eaton, one-time Melbourne cop turned Interpol sleuth; and that of the most notorious of the fixers, Wilson Raj Perumal, Singapore's

"Kelong King." Though Forrest came to the story by way of Eaton (who, post-Interpol, did a stint with FIFA as its chief security officer and now sets up office at the Qatar-based International Centre for Sport Security), what's notable about the book is his access to Perumal, whom Forrest tracks down in Hungary. In his Acknowledgements, Forrest notes that "Perumal earns my gratefulness for his courteous recollections." Beyond the cat-and-mouse aspects of the book, Forrest's work is notable for its descriptions of how the spectre of match-fixing permeated the game's highest levels. It's a perfect storm of the ascendancy of Chinese wealth (a country of serious gamblers), the rise of Internet bookmaking sites (creating market-making and transborder cash flow) and strapped international federations hungry for cash. My favorite passages of the book weren't directly related to either Eaton or Perumal. They involved Carsten Koerl, founder of Bet to Win, later renamed to Bwin, one of the foremost Internet bookers (and coincidentally a prominent sponsor of many top-flight clubs). Koerl went on to found Sportradar (and later Betradar), whose speciality is in spotting games whose betting action -- as compared to expectations -- made them outliers and possible fraud cases.

The Big Fix is a fascinating look at the world of illicit betting on international soccer games. The author, Brett Forrest, has done an excellent job pulling together the numerous threads of corruption that have intersected the world of professional soccer over the past decade, and provides an insider's perspective on how FIFA and its allies have attempted to combat those threats over the years. Forrest's style is breezy and conversational, and he moves around from location to location with a clear point of view. He also does an excellent job explaining the sometimes complicated mechanics of sports betting and how they apply to the scandals he discusses. However, the book suffers from some structural flaws, as well as an overly hagiographic writing style. The Big Fix is more a series of vignettes than a coherent end-to-end narrative, and it moves from character to character at a sometimes dizzying, and occasionally structurally incoherent, pace. As a result, it can be difficult to identify more than sketches of the protagonists, and the book seems uncertain whether it is intended as an overview or an in-depth bit of reporting. Additionally, Forrest writes somewhat breathlessly about the heroes of the book. Chris Eaton, the police officer, is described in melodramatic terms, and his character flaws are glossed over or described, in classic interview style, as weaknesses that are secretly strengths. More problematically, Forrest largely lets FIFA off the hook as a responsible actor, instead painting it as a helpless bystander to and active combatant of corruption in its ranks. Although Forrest mentions the allegations of implicit corruption underlying the Qatari World Cup bid or even the executive committee, he rarely turns an analytically critical eye

towards the complex relationship that FIFA has with fraud - or probes more deeply into how an international federation without law enforcement powers might better manage it.

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