Bribery and Corruption in the game of Rugby Union.

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Introduction:

For years, sports administrators all over the world have had to deal with some form of bribery and corruption in their sport. It seems to be an unfortunate by-product of both professionalism in sport and the advent of betting within a sport. Where players are being paid large sums of money to participate in their chosen field, then the possibility for them to be further paid by those that seek to reap the benefits from guaranteeing the result of a particular event is largely increased. Also, with the advent and ever increasing knowledge and acceptance of both government sanctioned and illegal betting, then the possibility and re-occurring existence of those that can be got at for the purpose of pre-determining the result of an event dramatically increases also. Certainly both individual and team sports are all targeted and examined. From professional boxers being paid to "take a dive" to a professional baseball team under-performing so as to lose the world series to individual players of an international cricket team being bribed to under-perform and allow their opposition to win the match.

This paper will look at what exactly is meant by bribery and corruption, taking its literal meaning from the Collins Dictionary and transcribing it into its use with sports. It will also examine the reasoning behind it's writing, that is the recent media coverage of bribery and corruption in the sport of international cricket. The paper will look at the aspects or variations to bribery and corruption in cricket. It will look at the reasons behind why there is bribery and corruption in cricket, who is targeted, how and by whom. It will examine the strategies that the International Cricket Council intends to adopt to reduce and minimise its effect on their game.

This paper will then look more definitively at the sport of Rugby Union. What existence there is of documented cases where any of the stakeholders in the game of Rugby Union have ever been offered some form of compensation to under-perform and thus influence the end result of a match to a pre-determined score. It will examine what strategies the rugby administrators have in place to ensure this type of behaviour is easily uncovered and swiftly dealt with effectively. And finally it will discuss the future of the game with this ever-present scourge in the background and how to ensure the game remains a healthy environment where it can never be given the opportunity to raise its ugly head.

Definition:

Firstly to begin with, let us look closely at what is meant by the terms, "Bribery" and "Corruption".

The Collins Dictionary defines bribe as to promise, offer or give something, often illegally to (a person), to procure services or gain influence. A reward, such as money or a favour, given or offered for this purpose. It also defines Corrupt as open to or involving bribery or other dishonest practices: a corrupt official. Corruption is therefore defined as the act of corrupting or state of being corrupt.

So in essence, for the purposes of this paper, a bribe would be to give something, usually a monetary consideration to someone immediately involved in the effected sport for the purposes of securing their influence and have them behave in some manner so as to pre-determine their event. Corruption would be defined as someone open to bribery, or being corrupt.

It should be noted here that there are always allegations of players, referees and umpires deliberately cheating for the purposes of one side or participant in any chosen sport winning their particular sport. This should be excluded from this discussion paper as it is not intended to be raveled up and included in the discussion. Only those purposely under-performing so as to influence and pre-determine the result of an event should be considered for discussion.

ANALYSIS OF CORRUPTION IN CRICKET

This topic was chosen because at the time of conducting research into possible topics, there was a lot of media coverage surrounding the corruption allegations in international cricket. So it seemed only natural to closely examine bribery and corruption in Rugby Union and perhaps put it under the microscope creating some waves and generating discussion.

Corruption in any aspect of life is caused by human weakness, greed and opportunity. Given the right set of circumstances, almost anyone would be open to a bribe. As the saying goes, "Everyone has their price."

It has been suggested by Sir Paul Condon, in his report on corruption in international cricket ***(See Attachment "A" for a full copy of this report)*** that the seeds of corruption in cricket were sown as early as the 1970s when county and club games in domestic tournaments in England and other countries were allegedly fixed by teams to secure points and league positions. Players were not bribed with money but relied on mutual interest. If a match was of vital importance to one team and not to the other then an accommodation would be reached between the teams as to who would win. Similar arrangements would be made to secure bowling and batting points, if applicable. The movement of players around the world gave players from a number of countries experience of these 'friendly' fixed matches. As a result, in a number of matches the ethic of winning or losing on merit was replaced by a pragmatic arrangement to divide the points and/or agree in advance who would win.

From the late 1970s onwards a more insidious and corrosive form of fixing took hold in cricket. This involved a player or players under-performing so that the result of a match or occurrences and events within a match were determined and fixed in advance. This allowed bets to be placed with a certainty or high probability of winning. If a team won or lost a match in a dramatic reversal of form and expectation, as a result of corrupt under-performance, then the winnings from betting on such a fixed event were greatly enhanced. It was also possible for a player or players to under-perform at pre-determined points in a match for betting purposes and yet still go on to win the match. Betting on

cricket grew in volume dramatically in the 1980s and 1990s as a result of the interaction of a number of issues. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) acknowledged that the growth of unlawful betting on cricket in India and the resumption of international matches against Pakistan in 1978 were key reasons for rising interest in betting on cricket. Live television coverage of matches and the growth in the number of One Day Internationals (ODI's) created an environment in which it was possible to watch and bet on cricket almost every day of the year. Betting on cricket grew even more with the widespread availability of mobile phones.

The most public of instance in recent years appears to be the discovery and subsequent admission by Hanse Crone, the then captain of the South African cricket team that he had accepted money from a bookmaker in exchange for information, pitch reports and match fixing. The whole affair first became public knowledge when on the 7th April 2000, the Communications Manager of the United Cricket Board of South Africa (the "UCB") received information from a journalist in England that a story was being circulated by a press agency that the Police in Delhi had held a press conference and alleged that Hanse Crone and three other South African players (Gibbs, Bojé and Strydom) were involved in match fixing. As a result of that call, the UCB contacted Hanse Crone, who initially denied the reports. The UCB issued a press statement to that effect. However on the 11th April 2000, Hanse Crone admitted to the UCB that he had accepted between $10, 000 - $15,000 US from an Indian bookmaker. As a result, Hanse was immediately withdrawn from the national team, a government enquiry was commissioned and the UCB made a public apology for initially defending Crone. Hanse Crone was banned from all forms of cricket by the UCB for life. He has appealed that decision, the result of which was not known at the time of writing this paper.

Certainly, there have been other recorded cases of players being involved in match fixing allegations. No one country appears to be exempt from these claims, as there appears to be investigations that have either occurred or are still underway in every cricket playing nation in the world.

Certainly, Australia is not exempt from this phenomenon. In 1994 during the tour of Sri Lanka, Mark Waugh and Shane Warne accepted money from an Indian bookmaker in exchange for pitch and weather conditions. Warne was fined by the ACB $8,000.00 and Waugh fined $10,000.00. Although the world governing body of cricket, the ICC was notified at the time of their actions, no public statement was made. As a result, the ACB and the ICC were both publicly criticised for its handling of the whole affair. This led to the ACB commissioning its own independent inquiry into match fixing. This report was published in May 2001 as is readily available on ACB's website.

Aspects of corruption in cricket:

In some respects 'match fixing' is a misnomer to describe corruption in cricket. As far as corruption on the part of players is concerned, the uninformed observer might assume this is straight-forward and involves players under-performing so that the opposing team wins and a betting coup takes place and the corrupt players are paid for their involvement.

Whilst indeed this is 'match fixing' in its most serious and lucrative form, corruption in cricket has many manifestations because every single aspect of a match can be and is bet upon. As a result every aspect of a match is vulnerable to manipulation and fixing, normally through under-performance. Often these fixed and corrupt incidents within a match have little or no effect on the final outcome of the game and consequently are harder to detect. Nevertheless, the betting coup takes place and the corrupt participants receive payment for the part they have played. This is referred to as “occurrence fixing”.

It is alleged that one can influence anyone of the following being pre arranged or fixed in order to allow a betting coup to take place.

- The outcome of the toss at the beginning of a match
- The end from which the fielding captain will elect to bowl
- A set number of wides, or no balls occurring in a designated over
- Players being placed in unfamiliar fielding positions
- Individual batsmen scoring fewer runs than their opposite numbers who batted first
- Batsmen being out at a specific point in their innings
- The total runs at which a batting captain will declare
- The timing of a declaration
- The total runs scored in a particular innings and particularly the total in the first innings of a One Day International

Possible reasons for corruption in cricket:

There seems to be a number of reasons behind why corruption in cricket is so widespread. Whilst the explanations and excuses have varied in emphasis they embrace some or all of the following:

- International cricketers are paid less than top soccer players, golfers, tennis players or formula one driver’s and are therefore more vulnerable to corrupt approaches.
- During the last World Cup and other major events the cricketers received a low single figure percentage of the proceeds from the event and resent the distribution of profits elsewhere.
- Cricketers have little say or stake in the running of the sport and limited recognition of their representative bodies, where they exist.
- Cricketers have relatively short and uncertain playing careers, often without contracts and some seek to supplement their official earnings with money from corrupt practices.
- Some administrators either turn a blind eye or are themselves involved in malpractice.
- Cricketers play a high number of One Day Internationals and nothing is really at stake in terms of national pride or selection in some of these matches.

- Cricketers can take money from potential corruptors in return for innocuous information and yet refuse to fix matches.
- Whistle blowing and informing on malpractice was ignored or penalised rather than encouraged.
- There was no structure in place to receive allegations about corruption.
- Cricketers were coerced into malpractice because of threats to them and their families.
- It was just too easy.

Particularly Vulnerable Matches:

It has been suggested that the corruptors of cricket were more likely to target some matches rather than others. Games where little is at stake, other than pride. Typically the last match in a series which has already been won convincingly by a team and substantial odds are being offered against them being beaten by the weaker side. One Day Internationals in tournaments where one of the sides playing has either already qualified for the next stage of the tournament or already been eliminated. Hansie Cronjè called these matches 'soft matches' and others have called them by the bridge term 'dead rubber' matches. Again betting against form provides attractive odds and if the match is fixed it guarantees a handsome return for the corruptors. One-Day International tournaments on neutral territory. Some players treated these events with indifference and the opportunity to maximise the receipt of gifts or indulge in under- performance for betting purposes.

Strategies to reduce and minimise the occurrence of match fixing in cricket:

The ICC in its report from Sir Paul Condon now have at its disposal a large number of recommendations that it can implement, all of which are designed to reduce and minimise the occurrence of match fixing in cricket. A general list of those is as follows:

- A professional and well-coordinated training and player education program encompassing all playing nations. Such training programmes to encompass intolerance to such unethical behaviour.
- Reduce the accessibility of players by those who wish to corrupt them, i.e. bookmakers etc.
- Players be given more involvement in the administration and ownership of their sport
- Players should be given a more consistent form of contract, including adherence to a Code of Conduct.
- The development of a full time professional panel of umpires under the auspices of a referee's manager.
- The creation of an Anti-Corruption and Security Unit within the ICC.

BRIBERY AND CORRUPTION IN RUGBY UNION

For a rugby union match to be influenced so as to have a predisposition for one particular team to be guaranteed of a victory would require a number of key players of one side being targeted.

Firstly, the Captain of the team would need to be influenced, to ensure that certain decisions were made with the end result pre-determined. Things like electing not to kick for goal when a penalty kick was awarded would be one way to influence the score.

Secondly, the kicker of the team would need to be influenced, again to ensure that the result of the match went the way already determined.

Thirdly, a particular player of the side may have some extra ordinary influence in a team's performance. Certainly Jonah Lomu, the All Black and Wellington Hurricanes would be one player that a likely corruptor would consider approaching if they wanted to influence any game where he was participating in.

Match officials or referees would also be a target for approaching and bribing, for the purposes of influencing a match end result.

An extensive amount of research has been conducted both nationally and internationally with all of the IRB's member nations being contacted. According to those interviewed, there has never been any recorded or documented case of a player or a referee having ever been bribed for the purpose of influencing and thus pre-determining the result of a rugby match. I find this staggering, considering that sports betting has been around for so long and with the advent of rugby becoming professional in 1996, then there certainly has been the possibility for such an occurrence taking place. It may well be that the "Old school tie" may be prevalent and that such cases have in fact existed but merely swept under the carpet to preserve ones code.

Referee Assessment Process:

The IRB has in place a comprehensive assessment system for the assessment of its referees in international matches. ***(See Attachment "B" for a sample Assessment form)*** Individual Rugby nations also implement the same or a similar assessment process for use in their own domestic competitions. The assessment system is a fairly in-depth analysis of the match and is broken down into a number of categories, which are further broken down into sub categories. CONTINUITY (Tackle, Advantage, Ruck and Maul) SET PHASES (Restart kicks/Open play kicks, Scrummage, Lineout) and MANAGEMENT (Control, Communication)

Each sub-category has a number of descriptors that the assessor gives a score out of 5. (1 being the least and 5 being the highest score) The scores are then totaled for that sub-category. Each Category is given a weight dependent on how important that particular category is in the game. For example, the tackle is considered the most important part of

the game to officiate, due in part to the sheer quantity that occurs in a match. Therefore is seems only logical that the tackle should be given more weight than say kicks and restarts. Each sub-category is multiplied by the weight and divided by the number of descriptors to give a score for the sub-category. At the end, all of the scores are totaled and a raw score is calculated. (Maximum score is 100)

However, a mere statistical analysis of a referee's performance may not necessarily reflect the referee's true performance in the match. For example, the referee may have had a very sound match, however, he or she may also have missed something that resulted in a try being scored when it shouldn't have, or a try not being scored when it should have. This is what is known as a critical incident. Also, the referee may have made a law error decision, i.e. ruled a penalty kick for an infringement that should only have been a free kick. These two facets of the game are now taken into account in the assessment process and each incident results in a loss of 10 points. These are deducted from the referee's raw score, giving a final score out of 100.

Assessments also have what is known as a degree of difficulty factor given to them. It doesn't adjust the final score but can be used to compare two assessments with the same score. Things that are considered when deciding a degree of difficulty are:

- Player skill deficiencies
- Crowd pressure
- Weather difficulty
- Ground conditions
- Intensity of fixture (what is at stake)

So a game involving players of low skill level, with a boisterous home crowd in driving rain on a muddy pitch and where the loser was relegated down to the next level, would be considered a match with a high degree of difficulty.

All referees appointed to the 2001 Super 12 had their performances assessed by Referee Assessors. Every assessment is sent to a central point at the IRB where the results are recorded in a computer program and used by the IRB selectors. At the end of the Super 12 competition a full and comprehensive review of the assessment process is conducted.

Independent Assessments:

Only assessments that are deemed to be independent are taken notice of. For example a Super 12 game between sides from South Africa and New Zealand has a referee appointed to it from Australia. A Referee Assessor from the country where the match is being played is appointed to conduct the assessment. This is an independent assessment.

At Test Level, a match between New Zealand and Australia could have an English referee and a South African Referee assessor. This too is an independent assessment.

Where for example two New Zealand sides play each other, a New Zealand referee is appointed to the match and a New Zealand Referee Assessor is also appointed. This is not considered to be an independent assessment and is not considered. THIS SAFEGUARDS ANY ACCUSATIONS OF BIAS. Usually local assessments are 1 – 2 points higher than independent ones.

For the Super 12 a record is kept of all assessments so that the Australian Rugby Union has a record of:

- The referees for each match
- The Referee Assessors for each match

The IRB does the same.

If a referee considers his report unfair he can refer it to a disputes procedure. That report and a video are handed to an independent country for re-assessment. That is if an Australian Referee disputed a report by a South African referee assessor it would be referred to New Zealand. There currently does not exist a similar procedure at IRB level as yet. If upon reassessment, the score has been amended by 5 or more points either way, it will be dispensed with and not recorded in any system.

Of particular concern is the recording of Critical Incidents and Law Errors. This season we have seen some recorded which are not regarded as "critical"" and other incidents regarded as "critical" which have not been included in the reports. These matters are included in the report following the review of the assessment procedure.

So as you can see we keep an eye on it to ensure it is as fair as possible. We also receive 2 team reports (1 from each team) following a match, which points out the views on a referee by the teams.

Possible ways for Abuse of the Assessment Process:

The way the system could be abused if a Quality Control system was not in place is as follows:

- Critical Incidents" and "Law Errors" not being included.
- Scores for the descriptors being inflated and not reflecting the information in the match statistics.
- Scores being deflated similarly
- Not reviewing the video correctly
- Not following the set procedures
- Incorrect calculations
- Showing Bias

Ways in which a referee can influence the outcome of a match:

If a referee set out to influence the result of the game he could do it in the following ways:

- Award or not award penalties at the correct time.
- Ensure a lopsided penalty count
- Sin Bin/Send off key players
- Incorrectly award scrum feeds
- Award 50/50 decision one way
- Rule 1 team's lineout throws not straight
- Award key penalties in goal kicking positions

An independent assessor should locate any such issues and his report should reflect these points.

It may well be possible to "buy a referee" but he or she would quickly be identified by his odd decisions/results.

The Australian rugby union currently has nine contracted professional rugby union referees, five of which are full-time and four of which are part-time. ***(See Attachment "C" for a copy of such a contract)*** Included as part of the contract are specific clauses relating to match fixing, under performing and the like. Section 13 relates to Code of Conduct and specifically deals with issues such as betting and or match fixing.

Conclusions:

Our research into bribery and corruption in Rugby Union has failed identify any specific incidents of such a practice having occurred. Extensive inquiries were conducted in New Zealand, South Africa and Australia, with no incidences of corruption or bribery in rugby union detected. Certainly, there were plenty of comical reports of one eyed and biased referees, most commonly originating from losing teams, but nothing serious enough to warrant a closer examination.

However, the writer's intentions were never to go on a witch-hunt, rather, examine the processes that are currently in place and ascertain whether or not they are adequate or whether or not they are open to abuse by any stakeholder within the game wishing to influence the outcome of a match.

Our conclusions are as follows:

Three groups of players would need to be targeted by those wishing to influence the outcome of a match. The captain, the kicker and perhaps an influential player of that team. Firstly, the Captain of the team would need to be influenced, to ensure that certain decisions were made with the end result pre-determined. Things like electing not to kick for goal when a penalty kick was awarded would be one way to influence the score. Secondly, the kicker of the team would need to be influenced, again to ensure that the result of the match went the way already determined. Thirdly, a particular player of the side may have some extra ordinary influence in a team's performance. Certainly Jonah Lomu, the All Black and Wellington Hurricanes team member would be one player that a likely corruptor would consider approaching if they wanted to influence any game where he was participating in.

However, in saying this, players at the elite level have to achieve certain goals during the season set by the player's coach. Any player not performing is automatically dropped from the playing squad and would lose a substantial sum of money in lost income. This is more so for players that represent their country, the higher up the ladder the player, the more to lose. This has a direct correlation to the type of player a prospective corruptor would try to influence. It would be this exact type of player that they would likely target. So the inducement offered to such a player would have to far out weigh the player's prospective loss of income through loss of position due to under performance. It is highly unlikely that an elite player from a particular squad would accept any form of inducement to underachieve in order to pre-determine the result of a particular match, especially where national pride is at stake.

Also, unlike cricket, where countries compete against each other a number of times during a series, rugby union internationals are played less frequently. This lesser quantity of international matches means that there are fewer opportunities for the players to perform at the elite level and therefore less of an incentive to throw "dead rubbers".

The next group of stakeholders prospective corruptors could target are match officials. This would include referees; touch judges, referee assessors, and now the television match officials. It is the writers opinion that the assessment procedure currently in place from the IRB downwards to SANZAR and the ARU would make underachiever's easily identifiable. This would make it easy for immediate and swift action to be taken against those seen as underachieving for any purpose. However, it should be noted that of all the stakeholders involved in rugby union, match officials are the only group who are not concerned with the outcome of a match. This peculiarity makes match officials even more a target for prospective corruptors, because of their apparent lack of affiliation with any side in a match, particularly when match officials nowadays are selected for elite matches with the first selection criteria being neutrality.

Other stakeholders, such as sponsors, coaches, spectators, administrators, unions, the governing body, competition (tournament) organisers, volunteers, sports medical fraternity, external venue contractors were apparel suppliers considered, however, it is difficult to see how such persons belonging to these groups could ever influence the outcome of a particular match.