



SURVIVAL TRAIL

When, in 2011, we started talking about match-fixing for betting purposes, everyone thought that we had discovered some fictitious phenomenon. History and experience has now thought us that we were speaking about a very damaging reality which had been alive for more than a decade before that, and has grown consistently enough to cause grave concern worldwide.

Our prompting tip had fortunately come about by a coincidental episode brought to light away from our shores. We were perhaps labelled as being alarmists, when in fact we were talking about an aspect as old as the game of football itself. Then, conveniently enough, the opportunity was found to divert the spotlight from an age old match manipulation activity on to something relatively new to our environment.

Match-fixing in whatever form or objective has blemished the game beyond repair. Doubts are now cast on every match at every level across the globe. The attraction of money is so irresistible that it has placed the actors on the pitch; the players and referees, at high contamination risk.

We are now witnessing the crumbling of the highest football institutions, which are supposedly structured to protect and guide the actors themselves. This seems to be far from expectations as we wait with bated breath for the next bit of news accusing individuals of bribes, conditioning decisions at the highest level. We hear of reputable individuals exposing a clean image being caught up in the mire.

Who do the actors look up to? How can the highest football authorities have the temerity to accuse somebody else of ruining football when they are themselves, allegedly scheming and plotting a very suspicious trail? This is definitely not beneficial to an ailing patient looking at surviving an onslaught of vicious attacks on its very existence. Football is not only about the actors' skills any longer, but also, and mainly, on the financial strength of those managing the sport.

The game itself will never die, but since the turn of the century it has taken quite a beating and will be marked for life. The tarnished scene may not keep attracting the serious and honest individuals, who fortunately still abound, and who the game so badly needs.ft