

DO WE REALLY LOVE FOOTBALL ?

GET READY TO FOREVER CHANGE THE WAY YOU THINK AND FEEL ABOUT FOOTBALL

This is a true story*

This was the world that Ye Zheyun moved into as "a football investor" in Autumn 2004.

Ye Zheyun and Pietro Allatta worked together. Allatta helped Ye Zheyun approach teams in the Belgian league, and then Ye Zheyun tried to get the teams to fix matches. Allatta denied having anything to do with fixing matches, claiming he was only a "football manager".

Belgian authorities seemed to believe him. At one point they had arrested Allatta, but then they had dropped all charges against him.

One Belgian law enforcement source was amazed at Ye Zheyun's success : " In total , Ye contacted fourteen Belgian professional football teams. They did not say anything to one another. From November 2004 to November 2005 , Ye worked and not once did the teams say anything"

In what might be a prophetic warning to the English Premier League and rich foreign owners with unknown backgrounds, the law enforcement said "They (the football clubs) lose their mind when they see money."

As it was, Ye Zheyun bought an interest in two teams in the Belgian league, but he did not work slowly. Ye Zheyun seemed to always be in a hurry; never more so than when he moved into the Finnish League. In the summer of 2005, after at least a dozen successfully fixed matches in the Belgian league, Ye Zheyun decided to buy the Finnish club Allianssi.

Allianssi had been formed a few years before, but now its owners were looking to sell. The team was in good playing condition, high up in the league but deeply in debt.

Ye Zheyun and his helpers promised to invest heavily in the club and turn its finances around. In one of his first games, he brought in five new players from Belgium and insisted they all play the match. It was to be a tough game against Allianssi's rivals Haka. But if the fans were expecting a close game, then they got a complete surprise. Their team did not just lose, but they lost big: 8-0. The odds, on the Finnish state gambling site, of the exact score were 8787-1 (i.e. you bet €100 and win €878,700). The coach and players declared it was an accident. As in Belgium, it was not the first incident of its kind.

The tabloid newspaper Ilta-Sanomat would reveal a few months later that a number of players had either been approached or had taken money over the years to fix games in the Finnish league. " I have taken money for a few games. This has been going on already for years" one of the players said.

Soon after investigations started, Ye Zheyun fled, never to be seen by officials again. Belgian television programme Panorama claimed that at least fourteen people - including players and managers - were involved in helping Ye and his activities. But the Brussels player Laurent Wuillot, who had been approached by one of Ye Zheyun's people to fix a match, laughed when he heard the number : " Fourteen players!? You must be joking. They are a lot more numerous than that. They can make more money on one fixed match than in an entire season, they are badly paid at these clubs and are desperate to survive". ft

**D. Hill – "The Fix - Soccer and Organized Crime".*