



CROSSING BORDERS

Recent events have not been beneficial to our football. Locally, we are aware of certain movements which do not bode well at all. Our intelligence indicates that match-fixing perpetrators may have crossed new borders and have managed to attack unsuspecting collaborators with a stronger approach.

This is partially controllable if the clubs look very carefully at their internal environment and be extremely careful about any offers for assistance which are sugar coated with venomous filling. Every manipulated match requires the input of the players or officials on the pitch. Once these cross the line and agree to fix, then no match is different for them, and will never go back.

With the authorisation of my very good friend, the Canadian investigative journalist, Declan Hill, I am reproducing part of his latest blog.

GAMBLING AT MANCHESTER UNITED

It was a dark night in October 2009. I was in a street bar in Asia.

The girls were in the front. The serious men who did the business were at the back. They were in suits. Scotch whisky bottles open beside them. Their favourite girls pouring their drinks and pouting.

They were some of the continent's biggest bookmakers. We were talking about the ways of the Asian gambling market works and the various fixes they had heard about recently.

The phone of the most important man rang.

He spoke for less than two minutes. Laughed and said, "It will be taken care of..." Then put down the phone.

"That was [...] one of the men at Manchester United," he said. "He does not fix. He just lets me know 'who is getting on the bus'. You know the injuries, the players who are not happy with the coaches, just the mood in the team.

It is very important for me to have this information to set the betting lines. We have people across English football. They don't get paid enough, so they phone us."

Then he told me that another very senior staff member at United was a close connection who bet with him regularly. "He never fixes. He just lets off tension by betting with me. He can afford it. Whenever he comes here, I am his host and makes sure that he has a fantastic time here."

It makes sense.

The gambling network that this particular man ran is massive. It is also discrete. If you can phone up the head of the Asian equivalent of William Hill and make a bet, why wouldn't you do it?

If you are a prominent player in the Premier League it is very difficult for you to put a bet down with British bookmakers and not have people know very quickly. It is what happened with relatives of Wayne Rooney were alleged to have placed suspicious bets on games a few years ago. Even being related to a player they were quickly identified. It is the reason why so many serious bettors and fixers only bet on the Asian market.

This story was remembered when I read The Sun newspaper story about Jose Mourinho, the current Manchester United manager, being furious when his team-sheets (who is getting on the bus) was leaked.

I am only surprised that it is still going on. It should have been shut down years ago. *Declan Hill*

All borders have fallen and football is prey to perverse approaches by unscrupulous individuals who are capitalising on the willingness of short sighted people ready to assist them.ft