



TO EDUCATE OR NOT TO EDUCATE

Educating the football family, especially over this last year, has given me a clearer picture and a better feel of the game's environment. I have listened to arguments and discussed with club officials and players. It turned into an interesting learning curve which has given me prompts of how to effectively address Integrity Tour participants. I am sometimes told that we should not be exposing football's negative image. It is our responsibility to educate and will continue to do so especially for our children's sake. The reluctance, by some, to educationally expose football negative facts over the last two decades, has caused irreparable harm.

I have met some interesting people who at one time or another have been involved in football's administration, coaching or active participation. Some have held on despite adverse conditions, whilst others have moved away, never to return. Various reasons have been highlighted, but it is the financial aspect which is a common factor in most resignations and reluctance to carry on in a sport which entails great personal sacrifice in a dubious setting. Some of those who hold on to the football world feel that they should honour and maintain their club's social responsibility, others are just in love with the game whilst some individuals enjoy the limelight. They have, over these last few years, been befriended by so called "investors" and other "sponsors" who have devised a system which presumably assists the clubs in their very existence.

I sometimes wonder how match manipulation is projected as a recent phenomenon. The difference in manipulating matches now, is that whereas before it may have been "utilized" for sporting reasons and an occasional bet, it may now be an opportunity and "investment" in helping the club's sustainability. It may also be offering a smooth playing field for a few individuals' betting prowess.

I had the opportunity to discuss match-fixing with a leading and well respected coach, who felt that he needed to consult with me and talk about the difficulties he sometimes faces when dealing with, out of all people, his club's administrators. He needed to learn and understand how the system actually works and what to be aware of. He is a serious coach whose technical ability is of a high level, but is worried and admits that there are instances when the match is beyond his control. He would very much like to believe that his successes or failures are genuine in their nature. But following a fruitful and long conversation, where I understood his concern, I was stunned and taken aback by his reply to one of my questions. He told me that if he is faced with a proposition or a call for assistance, made by a club official, to influence a match and help the club's financial situation and balance the salary bill, he cannot guarantee what his reaction would be and the probability is that he might even be tempted to agree and assist the club in their crooked plans. Wow! What hope? This came from an honest person who has dedicated his life and love to football. I expressed my disappointment whilst trying to fathom his statement.

This is an example of the difficult and very common scenario which we are operating in and it is up to all of us in football, to stand up and be counted. But most important is that certain club administrators need to operate within their means and avoid jeopardizing the game which they have a responsibility to safeguard and not treat it as a flexible toy to be twisted and turned in all shapes and forms to satisfy their dishonest brain.ft