

# ***A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO THE DUAL CAREER OF THE STUDENT-ATHLETE***

***María José Maciá-Andreu  
María T. Morales-Belando  
Lourdes Meroño  
Antonio Sánchez-Pato  
Juan Alfonso García-Roca***  
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Editorial DYKINSON, S.L. Meléndez Valdés, 61 - 28015 Madrid  
Telephone (+34) 91544 28 46 - (+34) 91544 28 69  
e-mail: [info@dykinson.com](mailto:info@dykinson.com)  
<http://www.dykinson.es>  
<http://www.dykinson.com>

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*Besing Servicios Gráficos, S.L.*  
[besingsg@gmail.com](mailto:besingsg@gmail.com)

## **Preventing Match-Fixing Through Dual Career**

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ANA MARÍA GALLARDO<sup>1</sup>, MARÍA JOSÉ MACIÁ-ANDREU<sup>1</sup>  
& CARMEN DANIELA QUERO-CALERO<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Facultad de Deporte, UCAM Universidad Católica de Murcia, Spain*

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## Abstract

The scandals of recent years in relation to match-fixing are increasingly widespread, and the organizations that are trying to combat it warn that match-fixing is one of the greatest threats facing sport in this century. The aim of the present study is to find out in the different sports disciplines what the basic knowledge is, as well as the opinion that the different agents involved in sport have about match-fixing. For this purpose, a questionnaire was administered to 243 participants. The main results confirm that there is a general knowledge about match-fixing and that it is illegal, being more known in professional sports than in semi-professional or amateur sports, as well as more widespread in collective sports than in individual sports. This study highlights the results in order to establish mechanisms to mitigate match-fixing through the figure of the sports counselor in the dual career.

**Keywords:** awareness raising, sports counselor, sports disciplines.

## 1. Introduction

Match-fixing has existed throughout the history of sport, although it has undergone a major change in recent years: the advent of online sports betting, betting markets, the absence of preventive educational methods, as well as the lack of adequate legislation, make this phenomenon a major threat to the sporting world (de Cima & Moriconi, 2022). According to the Council of Europe (CE, 2014), 'Manipulation of sports competitions' or also known as 'match fixing' means an intentional arrangement, act or omission aimed at an improper alteration of the result or the course of a sports competition in order to remove all or part of the unpredictable nature of the aforementioned sports competition with a view to obtaining an undue advantage for oneself or for others (article 3.4).

Training and education are among the key tools to curb the spread of the disease. One of the suggestions would be a greater investment in different contents such as the legal consequences of match fixing, as well as the ethical and moral considerations that this corruption entails. A good way to create legal ties is through the signing of a contract with a code of ethics or code of conduct by athletes, coaches, referees and anyone who may be involved (Haberfeld & Sheehan, 2013).

The main aim of this study was to know in the different sports disciplines what are the basic knowledge, as well as the opinion that the different agents involved in sport have about match-fixing in order to mitigate it through the dual career.

## 2. Methods

Descriptive study where participants provided their informed consent to participate prior to data collection. In accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki and the code of the World Medical Association, study participants were also informed of the research objectives and the confidentiality of the data collected during the study.

## 2.1. Participants

A total of 243 participants took part in this study, 76.1% of whom were men (n=185) and 23.9% women (n=58), all of Spanish nationality. Regarding their educational level the majority had studied a university degree 43.6% (n=84), or had completed it, 31.3% (n=76), while 30.9% (n=75) had completed vocational training and only 3.3% (n=8) had basic studies. The sport discipline is observed in Table 1. Table 2 shows the sports involvement of the participants.

**Table 1. Participants sports discipline**

Sports discipline	n=243	
	n	%
Football	91	37.4
Basketball	13	5.3
Volleyball	9	3.7
Rugby	38	15.6
Tennis	5	2.1
Handball	29	11.9
Athletics	17	7.0
Other	41	16.9

**Table 2. Participants sports involvement**

Sport involvement	n=243	
	n	%
Former athlete	29	11.9
Athlete	48	19.8
Coach	32	13.2
Member of sport club/association	25	10.3
Member of a federation	17	7
Referee	46	18.9
Parent/guardian	11	4.5
Manager	4	1.6
Sponsor	11	4.5
Sport fan	20	8.2

## 2.2. Procedures

A questionnaire was created to describe the degree of knowledge about match fixing and its implication in different sports. The questionnaire was divided into several parts: (A) descriptive information about the participants, (B) basic information about knowledge and participation in match-fixing, (C) analysis of the degree of agreement/disagreement of the participants with this topic using a Likert scale. Data collection was conducted over a period of 4 weeks (from 1 June 2021 to 30 June 2021). The questionnaire was sent to participants digitally via Google Forms® survey tool.

## 2.3. Data analysis

The statistical analysis was performed with the SPSS® Statistics v.27.0 package. A descriptive analysis was used through the frequency distribution.

## 3. Results

The results of this study show that there is a general awareness of the concept of match fixing (Table 3), knowing it through internet or scientific literature (24.3%), as well as having heard it in the sports federation (13.2%) or club (11.5%), among others. However, among the results of this research, it is shown that although most of the participants know that match-fixing is illegal, many would not know where they could report it (66.3% Vs 33.7%).

**Table 3. Results on the basic knowledge about match-fixing**

Questions	n=243					
	Yes		No		I am not sure	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Do you know or have you heard about the phenomenon of "match-fixing"?	230	94.7	12	4.9	1	0.4
Would increasing the awareness of people about match-fixing reduce this negative phenomenon?	163	67.1	26	10.7	54	22.2
Do you know, if match-fixing is legal?			226	93	17	7
Would you report match-fixing, if you were aware of it?	193	79.4	21	8.6	29	11.9
Do you know whom to report match-fixing?	82	33.7	161	66.3		

**Table 4. Results on agreement or disagreement about match-fixing**

Statements	n=243									
	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Indifferent		Agree		Strongly agree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Match-fixing is very common in sports	17	7	92	37.9	62	25.5	47	19.3	25	1.3
Match-fixing involves a great deal of money	8	3.3	10	4.1	46	18.9	59	24.3	120	49.4
Match-fixing is more likely in individual sports	27	11.1	47	19.3	94	38.7	45	18.5	30	12.3
Match-fixing is more likely in team sports	18	7.4	44	18.1	89	36.6	57	23.5	35	14.4
Match-fixing is more common in professional sports	14	5.8	37	15.2	72	29.6	55	22.6	65	26.7
Match-fixing is more common in semi-professional sports	23	9.5	36	14.8	58	23.9	71	29.2	55	22.6
Match-fixing is more common in amateur sports	74	30.5	77	31.7	92	37.9				
A higher level of education leads to less involvement in match-fixing	20	8.2	25	10.3	53	21.8	54	22.2	91	37.4
A lower level of education leads to less involvement in match-fixing	73	30	65	26.7	54	22.2	18	7.4	33	13.6
A higher level of income leads to more involvement in match-fixing	30	12.3	51	21	86	35.4	30	12.3	46	18.9
A lower level of income leads to more involvement in match-fixing	34	14	32	13.2	63	25.9	67	27.6	47	19.3
Match-fixing is against the principles of fair play					4	1.6	13	5.3	226	93
I would match-fix a game if it had no consequences (legal, disciplinary, social, etc.) and I would profit from it (financially or materially)	163	67.1	24	9.9	24	9.9	17	7	15	6.2
I consider match-fixing to be socially accepted	55	22.6	101	41.6	52	21.4	13	5.3	22	9.1
There is a great deal of control by the competent bodies over match-fixing	39	16	70	28.8	74	30.5	45	18.5	15	6.2
Sports betting has some relation to match-fixing in sports	11	4.5	6	2.5	20	8.2	54	22.2	152	62.6
Advertising of sports betting increases the occurrence of match-fixing	12	4.9	12	4.9	36	14.8	52	21.4	131	53.9

According to the results of our investigation about the agreement or disagreement about match-fixing (Table 4), it can be seen how match-fixing is not a very common issue and that it is known in professional sports, while in semi-professional and amateur sports it is not. In addition, there is greater agreement that match-fixing occurs more in team sports than in individual sports and that a higher level of education leads to less involvement with match fixing. Furthermore, among the results shown in Table 4, it can be observed that although it is not a socially accepted strategy, there is not much control by the authorities to prevent match-fixing, which in turn could involve other sectors such as advertising and marketing, the media and sports betting agencies.

#### 4. Discussion

For the present research, a questionnaire was applied to find out the basic knowledge in the different sports disciplines, as well as the opinion that the different agents involved in sports have about match-fixing, with the purpose of promoting it in dual career.

Referring to the general knowledge of match-fixing, 94.7% of respondents have heard of match-fixing. In this sense, it is confirmed that it is a very widespread knowledge. In this regard, a study analyzes the prevalence of match-fixing, and 6.3% of those surveyed state that they have been personally approached about match-fixing (Van Der Hoeven et al., 2020). Therefore, it is key to increase society's awareness of match-fixing, as 67.1% consider that awareness would reduce match-fixing. One of the problems is as some authors point out, that if these people are aware of the risks, they do not always see match-fixing as an ethical issue, but sometimes rather as a "friendly gesture" towards another club or athlete, which shows a lack of moral sensitivity, which is why raising awareness of this problem is essential.

According to the results of our investigation on the degree of agreement or disagreement on match-fixing, it is more common in

professional sport (26.7%), while in semi-professional and amateur sport it is less common. And it is in amateur sport that match-fixing unrelated to betting is most detected (Van Der Hoeven et al., 2020). But our results affirm that they agree or strongly agree that in general sports betting is related to match-fixing, without differentiating between professional and non-professional sports. Differentiated to team and individual sports, there are differences, being the collective sports in which they are more aware that more match-fixing occurs. These data are in line with those presented by Theodorou (2017) and Zamante (2012) where the percentage increases in the discipline of soccer.

Fortunately, according to our results, match-fixing is not socially accepted (64.2%), compared to the study by Van Der Hoeven et al. (2020) 17.8% knew someone who had been contacted for match-fixing, this percentage being lower in another study conducted in the Netherlands by Spapens and Olfers (2013, 2015). One of the reasons for the percentage differences may be due to cultural differences. On the other hand, experts indicate that the psychological factor is key, as a person who is aware of the situation will perceive match-fixing as a threat when it is offered (Boniface et al., 2012).

In our study, about 77%, do not agree with the statement of I would rig a match if it had no consequences and I would benefit from it, but Cashmore and Cleland (2014) and Hill (2009) claim that one of the reasons for being involved in match fixing is because they have a low salary, delay in payments (Hill, 2015) or even interest for a career advancement (Boeri & Severgini, 2011) or coercion (Capenter, 2012).

For this reason, the promotion of athletes with the figure of "sports counselors" through the dual career plan could be fundamental in the prevention of this type of fraud in the sports world, all through educational courses, lectures, personal experiences and workshops that encourage and prevent this practice of sports rigging in all categories and sports disciplines.

## **5. Conclusion**

It is clear that match-fixing occurs, and more and more methods, investigations, and initiatives are being undertaken to stop this wrongdoing. According to this study, most people are aware that match-fixing is prohibited, even if most of them would not know where or how to report the incident. Match-fixing is significantly more common in team sports than it is in individual sports, and it is much better known in professional sports than it is in semi-professional or amateur sports. After the presentation of this research, we can confirm that, although being on the correct track, there is still a long way to go in order to prevent a crime that exists in sports and that may be minimized by the implementation of sports counselors through programs like the dual career.

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