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# Sport asleep over gambling threat

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From: [The Australian](#) September 21, 2010

## **WHAT is the greater threat to the integrity of sport - performance-enhancing drugs or manipulation of match results?**

JUST a simple question. Very difficult answer. What is the greater threat to the integrity of sport - performance-enhancing drugs or manipulation of match results by players in thrall of corrupt punters?

Consider athletics. Every man or woman who runs faster than anyone before them, throws further, jumps higher is almost certain to be queried silently whether the performance has not been improved by chemists. History makes us cynics. Think of the innocent, drug-fuelled Marion Jones. Cheat and liar with the sweetest of smiles.

Consider cricket. Every performance is now questioned. Is making a duck a failure or a triumph? Is a wide a bad ball or a good ball? Was an opening maiden in Twenty20 cricket bad batting or good betting? In truth we don't know. But you fancy if a world-class bowler delivers a no-ball that is nearly a metre over the popping crease he might have sacrificed his hamstring more for money than country.

The answer to the integrity challenge has to be the manipulation of results more by betting than it is by drugs. The globe has united through WADA, a world body dedicated to discovering drug cheats. It hardly catches every cheat but it has made certain that to risk performance-enhancing drugs is to risk your career and reputation.

There is no such body in place to monitor betting. The ICC has an anti-corruption unit that lives comfortably in Dubai but appears to catch nothing but sunstroke. Its only claim to credibility appears to be the desire to make sure every head of the organisation is a knight of the realm. That might be a glib and unfair observation but it cannot be dismissed by weight of evidence to the contrary.

The manipulation of results in sport has mostly and recently been queried in international cricket, though soccer in Europe has previously been humiliated and shamed by it. But it has been brought much closer to home since allegations about the Australia-Pakistan Test match last summer that appeared there for the tourists taking but was rejected with facile field placings and under-age batting.

There have been local pre-cursors. Mark Waugh and Shane Warne accepted money - a trifle relative to their overall earnings - to provide information to a punter and an approach to current skipper Ricky Ponting at a dog track. More recently Test wicketkeeper Brad Haddin, among

others, have alerted authorities to questionable approaches from men with a penchant for punting.

Add to this the rugby league inquiry into a plunge on a penalty goal as the first score in a match between North Queensland and Canterbury plus a discomfort with AFL "tanking" and rorting by gambling is a problem at home as well as anywhere else in the world where sport is played and gamblers punt.

While the approach to drug abuse in sport is concentrated and unified throughout the world, the fight against the evil of betting corruption is about as effective as taking on a locust plague with an air rifle. Miss and miss.

The chief executive officer of betting exchange Betfair, Andrew Twaits, is preparing a paper that directly challenges the way sport is tackling the issue of gambling corruption. It will be well worth reading and perhaps the turning point in policing the vulnerability to sport of the quick and easy dollar.

Twait's has shared his thoughts with *The Australian*. He said yesterday: "The focus of recent concern can be distilled into four main areas: betting with illegal operators, betting on discrete elements of a game (so-called "micro" or "exotic" betting), betting live after a game has commenced and relationships between punters/bookmakers and players/officials.

"These are all important issues to discuss in the context of the local regulatory environment, but there are only two things we need to get serious about in terms of reducing the risk of gambling-related corruption in Australian sport. First, increase the likelihood of the wrong-doers getting caught. Second, introduce a punishment regime that is clear and will act as a real deterrent."

Twait's questions the definition of "illegal operators". He says, rightly enough, that there are two types. "They are either completely unregulated, such as bookmakers in India, or they are licensed somewhere but offer bet types that are illegal in a particular jurisdiction, such as bookmakers licensed in places like Gibraltar that offer Australians the ability to bet live online, in breach of the Commonwealth Interactive Gambling Act 2001."

In July 2000 all major sports in Australia discussed the threat of gambling-related corruption. Twait's, who was then working for the Australian Cricket Board, says that back then "it was recognised that a regulatory rather than a prohibitionist approach was required. Nothing has changed on that front. Attempts to ban online poker and casino use and online in-play betting by Australians have failed dismally and have left gaping holes in efforts to protect integrity and guard against problem gambling and money laundering."

He also makes the point that it is nonsense to think that gambling corruption would be confined to illegal betting operators. "The TABs' CCTV cameras are working overtime to try and identify the anonymous punters who have bet suspiciously through their retail outlets, bookmakers are increasingly reporting plunges that appear to be based on inside information and there are a number of now former Betfair customers who have been caught out trying to profit from corrupt activities," Twait's argues.

He argues too that it would be counter-productive to ban spot fixing, the form of betting based on an incident within a contest.

Twait's says it would have no impact on activities in the illegal market or the many overseas licensed bookmakers who show little regard for Australia's regulatory regime in the gambling industry. Nor would it act as a deterrent to criminals who are intent on corrupting players, officials and the integrity of sport.

Twait's returns to his two major thrusts. "These issues are all worthy of consideration but they mask the two things that need to be addressed in order to effectively combat the threat of gambling-related corruption. The first is an increase in the prospect of getting caught. The second is the presence of meaningful sanctions for wrong-doers."

He contrasts scrutiny of drug-based corruption (WADA) to that of crooked gambling. He argues it is left to the sports to decide whether or not there should be rules to prevent players, officials and administrators from betting on their sport or disclosing price-sensitive information to bookmakers and punters.

"There is no requirement for sports to educate players, officials or administrators in relation to corrupt conduct involving gambling," argues Twait's.

"There is no requirement for sports to enter into disclosure agreements with betting agencies - and conversely, other than in Victoria, there is no requirement for betting agencies to make betting records and customer details available to the sports for integrity-management purposes.

"It is also left to the sports to try and enter into disclosure agreements with the thousands of regulated and unregulated, big and small, betting agencies around the world that will allow the sports to find out who is betting on their events - if the betting agencies even know themselves.

"If an allegation surfaces, sports are left to determine whether and, if so, how to investigate. There are no prescribed penalties for a breach of sports' internal rules."

It is hard to defend Australian sport's vulnerability against Twait's theories. Worse, it appears most Australian sporting, gambling and regulatory bodies do not truly understand the issues or the dangers. The result is that they are taking an enormous punt with the integrity of sport