



CODE ON SPORT BETTING

AUGUST 2007



Executive Summary

- As a matter of urgency, sports governing bodies must ensure that their rules and regulations on betting are up to date and encompass the new offence of cheating and inside information.
- Education is essential for ensuring that sport remains clean. There is an urgent need for a comprehensive, well-funded education programme for all players with clear examples.
- National governing bodies and player associations should work in partnership to develop, promote and enforce the new laws.
- Bookmakers have a responsibility to work with sport to help protect the integrity of sport. Such cooperation should be a condition of any gambling license issued by the Gambling Commission.
- Players would welcome clarification from Government on how the new offence within the 2005 Gambling Act on “cheating” will be defined and how it will be implemented.

Introduction

The Professional Players Federation¹ is the national body for the professional player associations in the United Kingdom. There are over 15,600 professional sportsmen and women in Britain and the PPF is dedicated to promoting, protecting and developing the collective interests of these players.

This Code on sport betting has been designed to provide guidance to the member player associations. It has been given impetus by the Gambling Act 2005. From September 2007 it will be a criminal offence to “cheat” or help someone to cheat at gambling on sport. This could lead to a two year prison sentence.

History of corruption in Sport

Corruption in sport has existed since there has been betting on sport and betting on sport has existed for as long as there has been sport.

The 21st Century has seen a phenomenal increase in sport betting. Sport betting is now a £65.3 billion industry that has spread its operation worldwide². The advent of new technologies and gambling opportunities has created even more of a challenge to the integrity of professional sport.

We are confident that the vast majority of professional sport is clean. But sport must not be complacent about the threat of corruption. The PPF condemns corruption in sport in the strongest terms.

Preserving integrity in Sport

The national governing bodies of sport have rules and regulations concerning betting. It is essential that these rules are now re-examined to ensure that they comply with the 2005 Gambling Act as well as taking account of new gambling technologies.

Any changes to sport’s rules must be developed in partnership with the professional player associations. This will help to ensure players “buy in” to the new rules.

There is a need for clarification on the use of “insider information” in all sport, specifically in relation to the Gambling Act. The PPF believes that this should concentrate on known facts as opposed to expert opinions. However we recognise that this is a complicated area and that different sports may take different approaches. What is essential is that all sports provide clear and comprehensive examples of what is acceptable for players to discuss.

Bookmakers and the sports betting industry have a clear responsibility to support the integrity of those sports on which they take bets.

Purpose of Code

The Code reinforces the importance of “fair play” in sport and specifically the need for actions to protect the integrity in sport when betting takes place.

The Code sets out common standards that the different sports in membership of the PPF should address. It is not intended to replace the existing rules and regulations within specific sports but rather to act as a catalyst to ensure that these rules are fit for purpose. The Code complements the Government’s Ten Point Plan on Betting in Sport³.

This Code should be considered and endorsed by the new Gambling Commission. Furthermore, we believe that there is benefit in the Gambling Commission and regulatory authorities ensuring that national governing body rules on sport betting are “fit for purpose”.

¹Formerly the Institute of Professional Sport.

²36th Annual Report Gaming Board for Great Britain.

³DCMS Integrity in sports betting: A 10-point plan. 2005.

THE CODE

Player Associations

Professional Player Associations should make all reasonable efforts to work with the sporting authorities to preserve the integrity of their sport.

Player associations should work with their governing body to ensure that its rules and regulations on betting are up-to-date and compliant with the 2005 Gambling Act.

The member player associations should publicly endorse their governing body's rules and regulations on betting by players.

There is an urgent need for a comprehensive education programme for all players on the new gambling regulations. This should be run through the professional player associations in partnership with the governing bodies and betting industry.

The player associations should work with the governing body to put in place confidential mechanisms to enable players to report suspicious activity and inappropriate approaches.

The Players

Players must ensure that they are aware of their sport's rules and regulations concerning betting. They must at all times abide by these rules.

Players must recognise that they may at times be in possession of privileged information that would be valuable to gamblers. It is important that players are both aware of and then comply with their sport's regulations on "insider information".

National Governing Bodies

Sports governing bodies must ensure that their rules and regulations concerning betting are compliant with the Gambling Act 2005.

There remains a degree of confusion as to how the Gambling Act will be applied to sport betting, particularly with regards to insider information. It is therefore essential that governing bodies establish clear guidelines as to what is and what is not acceptable behaviour for players.

Governing bodies have a key role in ensuring the integrity of their sport. However, it is essential that players accused of any offences receive a fair hearing. Governing body rules and regulations must re-iterate the principle that players are innocent until proven guilty in corruption investigations. Furthermore, the burden of proof must always lie with the prosecutor.

Bookmakers

Bookmakers have a clear responsibility to support the integrity of those sports on which they take bets. There is an urgent need for legally binding information sharing between sport and the betting industry.

The PPF believes that there is a strong moral and business obligation for bookmakers to help sport stay clean.

As an absolute minimum, the betting industry should provide funding to ensure an effective education process is delivered to all professional sportsmen and women.

The PPF recognises that the sports betting industry is reliant on the results produced by governing bodies under the rules of their sports. This betting market relies upon ensuring sports are clean and also makes use of players and sports' intellectual property. At present, these are used without any direct recompense in return from the betting industry.

Government, its agencies and the police

"Maintaining integrity within sport is primarily an issue for the sport governing and regulatory bodies, particularly when it involves licensed/registered sports participants who commit disciplinary offences against the rules of their sport."⁴

The player associations believe that sports governing bodies are best placed to police their sport - provided that they are "fit for purpose". Nevertheless, all players remain subject to the laws of the land.

The Government must ensure that sporting authorities have the necessary powers and information in order to protect the integrity of their sport.

Government, including the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the Gambling Commission, the Home Office and the Police, should work closely with sport to provide clear advice on the interpretation and implementation of new laws on cheating on sport betting.

The Media and Press

The media and press play a particularly significant role in drawing the attention of the wider public to the issue of responsible gambling in sport.

The Code calls upon the press and media to maintain the highest standards of responsible journalism in the reporting of integrity in sport concerns.⁵

There will be occasions when the media has privileged access to sportspeople and learn of "inside information" that would be valuable for sports betting. It is therefore important that the media is similarly subject to rules and regulations on sports betting.

⁴ Gambling Commission. Integrity in Sports Betting Issues Paper. May 2007. Page 1 Para 1.2.

⁵ Press Complaints Commission - Code of Practice 2006.

Penalties and sanctions on players

The Code endorses the sanctions that are laid down by the governing body of the sport subject to a free and fair hearing for players accused of offences; all penalties being “reasonable”; and a proper independent appeals procedure.

We recognise that there may be times when it is appropriate to suspend players prior to any hearing, but these should be used sparingly and with due regard to the law.⁶

Working with Government Departments

The PPF would be pleased to work with Government to promote integrity in sport betting. This would include the Gambling Commission, The Serious Organised Crime Agency, The Home Office and The Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

The future

As the world faces a growth in gambling so sporting authorities including players and their associations must be aware there is no room for complacency in the face of betting in sport. More wagers, more money and more bookmakers add up to greater pressure on sport and all those who play it.

⁶ Any suspension handed down before a hearing would need to be on full-pay.

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- Professional Footballer Association
- Professional Golfers Association
- Professional Rugby Players Association
- Rugby League Players Association
- Scottish Professional Footballers Association
- World Snooker Association

Acknowledgement is given to the following sources of information:

- The International Cricket Council Code of Conduct for Players and Officials - 2001
- Evidence to the All Party Parliamentary Betting and Gaming Enquiry in to the Effects of Betting in Sport - February 2004
- The DCMS Ten Point Code of Conduct - Integrity into Sports betting - 2005
- The International Rugby Board : Regulation 6 on Wagering
- Rules of the Football Association 2005/06 - FA Rule E8 on Betting
- Gambling Commission's Integrity in Sports Betting Issues Paper. May 2007.



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