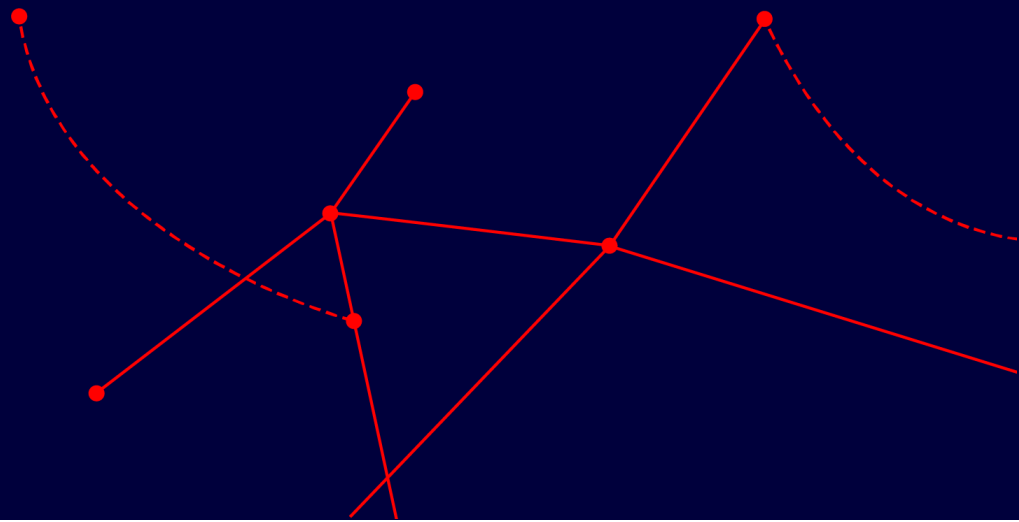


“Fixed Match” Scams – A Social Media Investigation



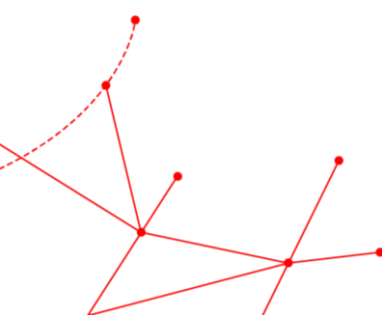
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1 Summary

The turn of this decade has seen an undeniable increase in the level of media coverage allocated to reporting match manipulation in global football. Results of investigations are quickly published around the world, aided by the rapid growth of social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, where thousands of users are able to read, comment and share stories within seconds. Simultaneously, we have seen an unprecedented rise in the availability of global betting markets – bettors are now able to place bets on competitions they could not previously, and do so anonymously via the increased access of the Asian bookmakers.

Unfortunately, we live in a world where certain individuals aim to profit from prior knowledge of results in manipulated football matches. The potent mixture of the above factors has led to a new breed of scam artists, whose sole aim is to lure unsuspecting online customers into paying for such 'inside' information. The purpose of this document is to provide an in-depth overview of how these scams work from start to finish, including how this is applied to a social media platform and any notable examples that have surfaced in recent years.

In the professional opinion of the FDS, it is very clear that these users simply do not hold prior knowledge of match results. Instead, it is evident they are implementing fairly simple scams to take advantage of individuals, selling false information for a given fee. If these individuals were to indeed hold true prior knowledge of manipulated matches, they certainly would not be offering such knowledge in the public forum, particularly due to the risk of prosecution.



2 Anatomy of the scam

2.1 “The Hook”

The ‘hook’ of these scams is very simple; the user/account provides specific information regarding the results of football matches for a fee (approximately €50 - €100 per match). These matches usually involve teams that could feasibly be involved in truly manipulated games; for example, teams that have historically been known to fix matches, or teams from countries that could be at a high risk of match manipulation. This is a deliberate ploy designed to encourage potential customers to buy into their ‘hook’.

The fee involved is very rarely mentioned in public, with it instead being the case that customers must ‘private message’ the scammer for further information. This is once again a deliberate tactic employed by the user, this time designed to prevent the transparency of information and to withhold as much as possible from third parties and avoid scrutiny.

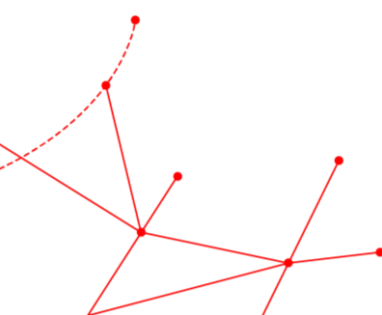
The key of the ‘hook’ is not to provide the same match result to all customers. Instead, the scammer will aim to cover all bases and send out different results to different customers, ensuring in the process that at least one group of customers receives the actual successful result.

2.2 “The Convincer”

The ‘convincer’ is a term used to describe the process of turning something fairly ordinary into something extraordinary. In the instances of these social media scams, this involves the production of a winning betting slip (often physical evidence photographed and published to the account) for all members of the public to see. This will often involve a highly unlikely correct score or half-time/full-time result, which would be extremely difficult to predict naturally.

However, behind the scenes, such evidence can easily be produced in a variety of different ways. The easiest is to simply place a bet on all possible outcomes, in an identical fashion to the ‘hook’, so that there is a guaranteed winning bet slip once the game has finished. It is even possible to place a bet, photograph the betting slip and then cancel the bet, thus avoiding losing money on an outcome that the scammer has no advance knowledge of.

Another option would be to doctor the image to fit the result (commonly referred to as ‘photoshopping’), or to even create your own bet slip using computer software. These are all fairly crude tactics, although the end result is always the same; supposed evidence that this user does indeed have access to manipulated matches.



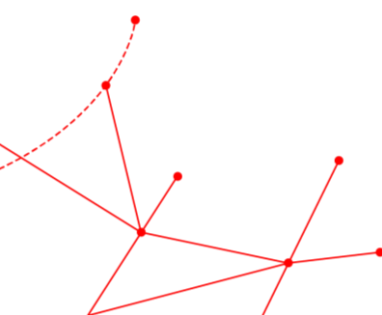
2.3 “The Enticer”

The third and final part of the scam is the ‘enticer’ – widely regarded as the most difficult to execute, whilst also presenting the highest potential profits to the scammer. Once the original ‘hook’ has been completed, there will remain two distinct categories of individuals.

- a) Those who did have a winning outcome.
- b) Those who did not have a winning outcome.

Those in category ‘a’ are in distinct danger of being manipulated by the ‘enticer’. These users have seen a wholly unlikely outcome unravel before their own eyes, supported by physical evidence from the scammer themselves. Although the percentage of users that fall into this category is very small, they are very likely to want access to further manipulated results. This is where the scammer makes the bulk of his money; he is able to charge extortionately high fees for further information, without necessarily even having to provide it.

Although the users in category ‘b’ do not appear to be at immediate risk, there is also a possibility they may also be lured into the ‘enticer’ at a far later date. The scammer may choose to offer a ‘money back guarantee’, in order to entice these individuals into another new ‘hook’. This effectively puts these individuals into a situation they believe they cannot lose; in reality this is clearly not the case. Alternatively, depending on the scale of the scam, the scammer may choose to simply ignore these category ‘b’ individuals and retain their initial investments.

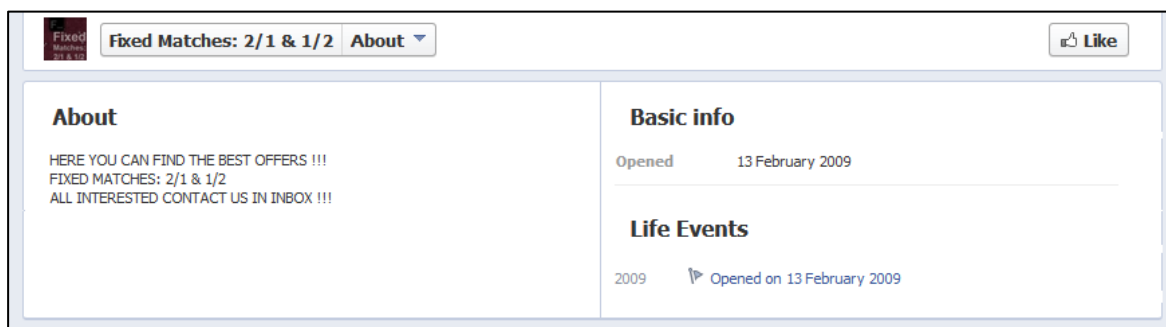


3 Application to social media platforms

As already mentioned, the rapid rise of social media platforms has indirectly caused the advent of these scam artists. The key factors behind the success of these crimes are detailed below:

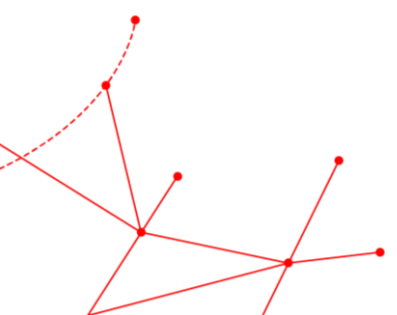
3.1 Anonymity

Whether it be Facebook or Twitter (the two main platforms used for the implementation of this scam), profiles can be completely anonymous. This prevents the users true identities from ever being known, with even the most simple details (such as geographical location) entirely withheld, or even fabricated.



3.2 Uploading images

All modern day social media platforms allow photographs to be uploaded in support of their 'fixed match' information. These are used both as adverts to their service, as well as evidence that they do genuinely hold this knowledge.



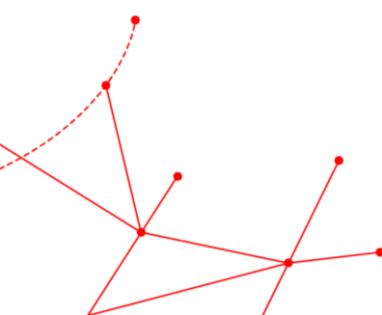
3.3 Ability to edit posts

Historically, the only way for users to hide their posts on any social media platform would be to delete them at a time they see fit. A classic example of this would be to publicly post the result of a 'fixed match', retain the post if the outcome is successful and delete it if unsuccessful. For new users of the page, this then appears as though there have only been winning bets on the site.

A recent update to Facebook, within the past few months, has allowed users to edit their posts or the date that these posts were made. This only serves to expand the scammer's arsenal, providing them with a dangerous tool to fool unsuspecting customers. The screenshot below highlights this in further detail:

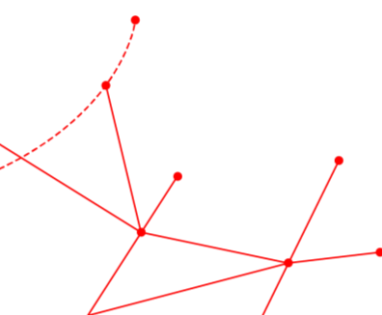
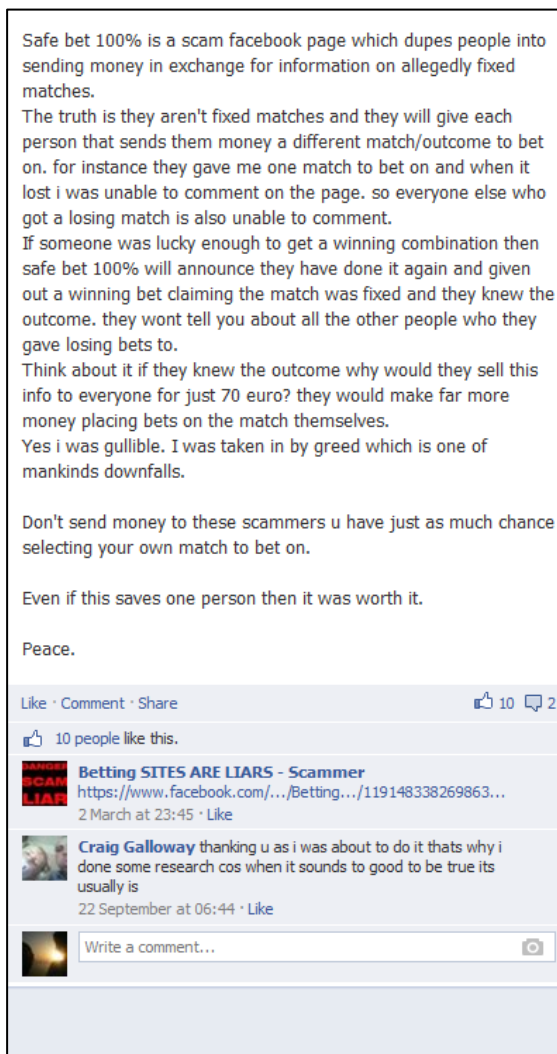


Whilst it appears that the scammer has, against all odds, been able to predict the exact final scoreline of this Venezuelan match, upon closer inspection it is very clear that this post has been doctored. The 'custom' highlight suggests that the date of this post has been edited to appear as before the match took place. Within the industry, this is commonly known as 'after-timing'.



3.4 Prevent further communication from customers

This is a critical feature of social media for the scam, which prevents unhappy customers from complaining; they can simply be blocked by the scammer. Such a basic feature stops such individuals from being seen on the page ever again, which is often the case for users that have become aware of the true nature of the scam and are attempting to inform other potential clients. One user, shown below, has even found it worthwhile to create a dedicated page to detail the scam. He explicitly states that “I was unable to comment on the page. So everyone who got a losing match is also unable to comment”.



4 Historical Examples

International friendly – Autumn 2013

Page name: “Fixed Matches: 2/1 & 1/2”

Claim: Manipulated for a 3:2 correct score

Conclusion: The match ended in a 3:2 victory for Team A.

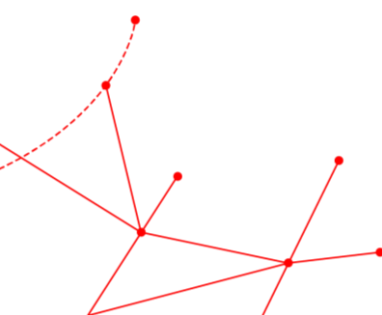
There was no significant betting observed across any of the pre-match markets, highlighting that bookmakers compiled their odds for this match very accurately. In addition, there was not a significant turnover for this fixture on the lead betting exchange Betfair, highlighting that exchange bettors did not pay any untoward attention to this match. In the experience of the FDS, manipulated matches will often see increased activity on the exchanges, particularly those which are manipulated for an outcome in an illiquid market, such as a specific Correct Score.

Furthermore, all of the live markets traded regularly across FDS-monitored bookmakers, with offered odds tracking calculated odds throughout. Despite multiple goals in this match, bookmakers continued to offer competitive odds and made regular line changes, following standard trading procedure. This highlights they were willing to incur further liabilities on all outcomes and held no independent concerns regarding the integrity of this fixture.

There was speculation regarding the legitimacy of this match on the social media platform Facebook, with a particular focal point on the pre-match Correct Score market, specifically the 3:2 Correct Score.

However, this market saw no significant betting across all FDS-monitored bookmakers despite the Correct Score market being notoriously illiquid and thus grossly affected by small betting volumes. If this match were to have been manipulated for such a result, the FDS would have anticipated seeing strong odds movements in these markets. The absence of any betting activity here, combined with a lack of notable betting support for a high scoring match or a Team B defeat, helps to reinforce the legitimacy of this match. It is instead the opinion of the FDS that this Facebook page is nothing short of a notorious scam, luring in customers with the premise of knowledge of manipulated matches, in exchange for a monetary fee.

To conclude, based on the evidence available, this match is unlikely to have been manipulated for betting purposes.



English Football League – Autumn 2012

Page name: “Fixed matches 100% safe. Bet with trust”

Claim: Manipulated for a 2/1 Half-Time/Full-Time result

Conclusion: This match finished in a 3:2 victory for Team A.

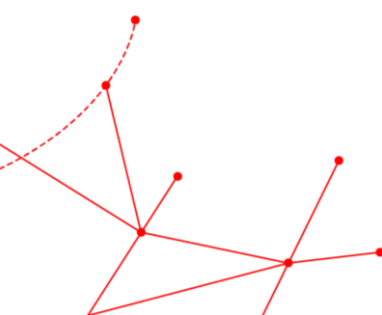
There was no significant betting observed across the pre-match markets, highlighting that bookmakers compiled their odds for this match very accurately.

The particular focal point is on the pre-match Half-time/Full-time market, where there was a large winning bet on Team B winning at half-time and Team A winning at full-time, according to market intelligence. However, the FDS observed no significant betting across all FDS-monitored bookmakers on the Half-time/Full-time market. This is despite the Half-time/Full-time market being notoriously illiquid and thus grossly affected by small betting volumes. If this match were to be manipulated for such a result, the FDS would have expected seeing strong odds movements in this market. In addition the FDS would have expected strong betting support for Team A in the 1X2 and the AHC both pre-match and live as well as strong Overs betting however no significant odds movements were witnessed in any market.

It must be noted that some match-action could appear to be favouring the betting on Team B winning at half-time and Team A winning at full-time. Such as Team A’s goalkeeper conceding a penalty after unfairly challenging a player of Team B, which allowed the away side to take the lead in the early in the match. Also, a Team B player was sent-off by the referee for a second yellow card during the second half. And finally, a player of Team B scored an own goal in the match. Although this kind of match-action is often witnessed in suspicious matches, the live betting patterns observed show only minor deviations from our calculated odds. This helps to ease any concerns over the pre-match Half-time/Full-time betting and enhances our confidence in the integrity of this match.

More importantly, all of the live markets traded regularly across FDS-monitored bookmakers, with offered odds tracking calculated odds throughout. Despite multiple goals and a red card in this match, bookmakers continued to offer competitive odds and made regular line changes, following standard trading procedure.

To conclude, this match is unlikely to have been manipulated for betting purposes.



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