



By George Stavroulakis

Match-fixing fears for Australian football

FFA has spoken out on match-fixing in lower-league football, after ABC News revealed that two men were arrested over allegations of match-fixing during an NPL2 match between Melbourne City's NPL side and Dandenong Thunder.

The incident occurred two years ago, on August 19, 2017 between a City NPL side featuring Daniel Arzani and Dandenong Thunder's title-winning NPL2 side, featuring a slew of ex A-League talent alongside former Socceroo and Manchester City midfielder, Simon Colosimo.

Dandenong raced into a 2-0 lead after just 12 minutes at City's Bundoora ground, but then conceded twice before the 60th minute to draw the match 2-2. Thunder were already guaranteed to win the league at this stage, while City eventually finished third.

"The preservation of the integrity of football is paramount and FFA will take all necessary steps to cooperate with authorities to this end," FFA CEO David Gallop said in a statement, with the governing body refusing to be drawn in further to an incident "before the courts".

While this is only the second incident of match-fixing reported in the NPL after Southern Stars were convicted of match-fixing in 2013, both incidents have exposed the pressures semi-professional footballers can face to rig matches.

Social media and football forums are filled with anecdotes of eSports, FFA Cup and NPL live streams filled with comments and interaction from Russian users, betting on the outcome.

The FFV's recent announcement that matches are to be increasingly available for live-streaming could further encourage betting on the competition. The FFV also admitted earlier this year that it has "no policy" on the release of live data surrounding NPL matches.

Former ASADA chief, Richard Ings, told The World Game in May last year that the fact football was a team sport didn't nullify the risks.

"It troubles me that low level amateur sport, any sport, has betting markets on them. This level of sport is so simple to fix. This level of sport can never have any security presence at the grounds," Ings said.

"The reality is that all sports with betting markets are vulnerable.

"With spot betting markets it only takes one player in a team to be involved, as we saw recently in the UK,

where the market related to getting a red card."

Southern Stars were approached by an infamous Malaysian match-fixer as part of an international criminal syndicate in 2013, with ABC reporting a midfielder's account of playing at the time:

"I was stressed and panicking as it wasn't coming. I remember getting a call when we were losing 2-0 and the boss saying this better f**king happen," midfielder Reiss Noel said.

"I felt threatened as we weren't getting the goals required."

With little oversight or security to prevent match-fixing from taking place at an amateur or semi-professional level, NPL, NPL2 and FFA Cup games are regularly open for betting on a variety of overseas-based betting websites.

The effect that a similar level of betting exposure at a low-level has had on other sports came into prominence in January, when 28 tennis players were accused of match-fixing, in a "tsunami" of corruption that led to the arrest of at least one Australian.

Men charged with fixing outcome of Victorian soccer match

Two men have been charged with allegedly fixing a match in Victorian soccer's second tier, and betting on its outcome. **The charges** stem from an 18-month investigation by Victoria Police's Sporting Integrity Intelligence Unit into a National Premier League division 2 match in Bundoora on August 19, 2017.

On that day, a match between Melbourne City Youth and Dandenong Thunder ended 2-2, with the Thunder giving up an early two-goal lead.

A 54-year-old Essendon North man has been charged with corrupting a betting outcome, while a 52-year-old Gold Coast man has been charged by Queensland Police with facilitating

match-fixing conduct.

They are both due to face court on March 29.

The integrity unit partnered with Victoria's Purana Taskforce and Queensland Police Major and Organised Crime Squad to investigate the alleged crooked conduct.

The unit is responsible for the collection, analysis and sharing of intelligence relating to sporting integrity issues in Victoria, including match-fixing.

It's the second case of alleged match-fixing in the lower divisions of Victorian soccer in recent years, after a multi-million-dollar international match-fixing ring involving the Southern Stars was uncovered by police in 2013.

In that case, players from the United Kingdom were allegedly involved in more than \$2 million worth of winning bets.

Four players were convicted and fined, however one of them, who had pleaded guilty, later had his conviction overturned.

Earlier this month the federal government announced that the unit would receive increased funding before it will be absorbed into a newly-formed umbrella commission, Sports Integrity Australia.

Sports Integrity Australia is designed to become a one-stop-shop for investigating doping and match-fixing in Australian sport.