

1.6 Corruption in African sport: a summary

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2015 is the golden jubilee of the All-Africa Games, the continent's equivalent of the Olympics, but there is not much else to celebrate 50 years after the holding of the first Games, in Brazzaville in 1965. Sporting excellence on the field of play continues to elude Africa despite the continent's immense natural athletic talent.

Africa remains stunted by a combination of talent drain (mainly to Europe), a lack of government investment and policy guidelines, corruption and gross mismanagement. International sporting life just seems to pass Africa by. The 2010 football World Cup finals came to South Africa only because of a deliberate continental rotation policy by the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA).² No African city has come anywhere near mounting a serious bid for the Olympics, or even the Commonwealth Games: Abuja, the Nigerian capital, failed with a poor attempt for the 2014 event – won by Glasgow – its bid found wanting in the key areas of transportation, information and communication technology, accommodation, the proposed games village and sports venues, and finance.³ Africa has produced close to 200 (13 per cent) of the medals on offer in the ten most recent World Athletics Championships, nearly five times the total tally of Asia, which is due to host its fourth championship in Beijing later in 2015, after Osaka (2007), Tokyo (1991) and Daegu (2011).⁴

The African Union (AU, then the Organisation of African Unity) originally conceived of an All-Africa Games managed by the now defunct Supreme Council for Sports in Africa (SCSA), composed mostly of political appointees with little or no experience in managing sport. The AU resisted proposals to turn the management of the Games over to the Association of National Olympic Committees of Africa (ANOCA) despite promises in 2011,⁵ transferring administration to the AU Sports Commission in July 2013.⁶ Since 1987 the Games have continued to provide a case study of poor organisation and management, failing to capture the imagination of Africans or the world, resulting in diminished competitiveness and commercial value, and largely shunned by the continent's top athletes.

Governance

According to a 2009 International Olympic Committee (IOC) report, football, basketball, volleyball, athletics (track and field), swimming and boxing are the most popular sports among Africans.⁷ Each of these sports is managed by national associations, often a grouping of affiliates within national borders. These national associations are in turn affiliated to regional bodies, such as ANOCA or the Confédération Africaine de Football (CAF), through which they gain admittance to international organisations. These administrative structures also serve as participation/competition levels from the smallest village tournament to the world championships.

The classic cases of abuse of office and clinging to power are still widespread within sports organisations in Africa. Reflecting its universal popularity, football is always prone to forces of corruption. The first area of abuse and malpractice in football is the election of administrators. In what passes for sports elections, vote-buying, manipulation and other corrupt practices are rampant. In 2014 FIFA cancelled the re-election of Cuthbert Dube as the president of the Zimbabwe Football Association (ZIFA), citing irregularities that included claims of vote-buying and manipulation.⁸

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Within CAF, president Issa Hayatou is into his 28th year in charge, following his unopposed reelection in Marrakech, Morocco, in 2013.⁹ A rule change barring non-executive members of CAF from running prevented Ivorian Jacques Anouma from standing against the Cameroonian, whose stay at the top of CAF beyond 2017 is clearly likely after the removal of another rule setting a 70-year-age limit for members of its executive committee.¹⁰

At the national level, by way of example, in the election of officials to the Kenyan Football Federation (KFF) the sports media covering the poll would hear claims that top candidates for the position of chairman/president denied their rivals access to delegates (often a bare majority would be sufficient to win) by paying for the delegates' transport, and providing room and board in hotels watched by the candidates' henchmen right until they went to vote.¹¹ There was never any actionable proof but, during the 2004 KFF elections, which came about after another of the many FIFA interventions in Kenyan football administration, the then sports minister, Najib Balala, sought to put an end to this practice by ordering the deployment of anti-corruption police to guard against any form of bribery and manipulation of delegates.¹²

Football suffers under these elected officials because they have an eye on other things – such as politics, or simply the amassing of wealth. As a result, there is a chronic lack of professionalism in the management of the game. At the national level the approach to matches, even big internationals, is shockingly casual. Money meant for looking after the team – players' allowances and bonuses – is pocketed by the administrators in the football associations. Even national team selection is not free of corruption. In conversations with players while on the football beat for the *Daily Nation* in Nairobi, this writer heard how one local coach of the national team would demand a cut from the allowances and bonuses of certain players, especially the peripheral ones, or he would drop them. The well-

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documented strikes by African national teams, most notoriously Cameroon,¹³ Nigeria just before the 2013 Confederations Cup,¹⁴ Togo (at the 2006 FIFA World Cup)¹⁵ and the famous airlift of cash in bonuses to the Ghanaian players in Brazil during the 2014 World Cup,¹⁶ are a reflection of the shocking cases of corruption the Africa game suffers. While players risk public ridicule, many say that if they don't resort to such measures the administrators will pocket their money.

In Kenya, a 2015 report by the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC), which led to the suspension of several government ministers, implicated the Football Kenya Federation (FKF) president, Sam Nyamweya, in the alleged embezzlement of federation funds.¹⁷ In 2013 claims had emerged that Nyamweya and his executive committee could not account for more than US\$410,146 received between November 2011 and December 2012.¹⁸ In addition, a FIFA report during the January 2015 crisis, which delayed the new Kenya Premier League (KPL) season kick-off, questioned the promotion of Shabana FC, a team closely associated with Nyamweya, to the KPL. Indeed, the contentious expansion of the KPL from 16 to 18 teams by the FKF seemed to have been designed to accommodate Shabana, whose promotion was just as controversial, with the curious awarding of points off the field of play.¹⁹

In Zambia, Kalusha Bwalya is one of the continent's best football talents, a former winner of the African Player of the Year award, and captain of the national team that perished in a plane crash off the coast of Gabon in 1993 (he was the only player not on board). He is now the president of the Football Association of Zambia (FAZ), and is being investigated by the country's anti-corruption authorities over US\$80,000 he said was received during the 2011 FIFA Congress in Qatar in the name of the FAZ but that was paid into his personal account.²⁰

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Financial misappropriation is not limited to football, however. Apart from having the country's biggest doping scandal happen on their watch,²¹ the Athletics Kenya (AK) president, Isaiah Kiplagat, and his deputy, David Okeyo, are also being investigated by Kenya police over a US\$200,000 grant that was deposited in the AK account in Nairobi but could not be accounted for.²² Kiplagat stepped down as AK president on 1 May 2015, after 23 years in charge, not in relation to allegations and ongoing investigations but, ostensibly, to focus on his campaign for the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) vice-presidency.²³

Match-fixing

Match-fixing has emerged as a huge threat to sport in Africa. The story of the cricket scores emerging from the lower tiers of Nigerian domestic competition indicated to the world how low the African game was sinking at the hands of those bent on manipulating results.²⁴ The continent's football is replete with tales of match-fixing. In 2014 a South African referee, Clifford Malgas, was jailed for two years for corruption and two years for perjury for his role in trying to manipulate the outcome of lower league promotion play-off games in 2011.²⁵ A former South Africa assistant coach, Phil Setshedi, got a three-year term for his part in the scam. He was caught in a sting operation as he tried to bribe an undercover policeman posing as another referee.²⁶

There is also an external angle to match-fixing in Africa, involving criminal betting syndicates, especially from Asia. In 2013 reports surfaced of a convicted match-fixer, Wilson Raj Perumal, using referees to manipulate exhibition matches before the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa.²⁷ One such referee, Ibrahim Chaibou, is under investigation by FIFA for his role in what is seen as manipulation of the results in two friendly matches played by South Africa against Guatemala and

Colombia in May 2010. South Africa beat Guatemala 5–0, with three suspicious penalties being awarded by Chaibou, all for handball.²⁸

In 2012 ZIFA banned its CEO, Henrietta Rushwaya, and 15 players, a coach and two journalists for life for their role in the fixing of matches involving Zimbabwe during a tour of Asia between 2007 and 2009.²⁹ After this ban, reports emerged that the country's top domestic championship was riddled with match-fixing. In 2011 ZIFA imported referees from Zambia and South Africa for the country's top knockout competition, the Mbada Diamonds Cup, amid claims of bribery and match-fixing among local referees.³⁰

Human trafficking and African sport

Poverty is a common phenomenon in Africa, so sport affords a way out. This, combined with the abundance of talent and the globalisation of international sport, means that many top sports competitions and clubs around the world look to Africa to provide cheap talent. Getting a professional sports contract is the ultimate dream of many young Africans, and this leaves them vulnerable to unscrupulous scouting agents, who dump them in Europe and other parts of the world when they cannot secure their dream contract.

Charities such as the Paris-based Culture Foot Solidaire (CFS) campaign against the trafficking of young players.³¹ CFS estimates that, each year, some 700 boys are smuggled into Europe from Cameroon alone by rogue agents.³²A 2013 CNN report states that, according to CFS's founder, Jean-Claude Mbvoumin, the charity was at one time monitoring more than 1,000 boys in France, many of them taken from football academies in Africa.

The global push for popularity by the US National Basketball Association (NBA) is now seen as another avenue of abuse by human traffickers.³³ While social responsibility programmes such as the NBA's Basketball without Borders bring young basketball players around the world together for specialised coaching and to encourage positive change in the fields of education and health,³⁴ the story of Nigerian player Chukwuemeka Ene is evidence that rogue agents are involved in the recruitment of basketball players. Ene was brought to the United States along with two other players by a basketball scout, who promised him a college education and a shot at a professional game, but subsequently abandoned him.³⁵

Defections of African athletes

A 2003 *Economist* report referred to the defection of African athletes to rich countries as the 'brawn drain from Africa'.³⁶ Kenya has borne the brunt of these defections of track stars, with a 2013 report by the *Daily Nation* in Nairobi reporting that there had been 40 known defections of young Kenyans to the Gulf, mainly Qatar and Bahrain. Following in the footsteps of Wilson Kipketer, who ran for Denmark in the 1990s, Saif Saeed Shaheen, previously known as Stephen Cherono, became the most high-profile Kenyan to defect to the Gulf, winning gold for Qatar at the World Athletics Championships in Paris in 2003.

After Shaheen's success, Qatar and Bahrain went full throttle in recruiting Kenyan runners.³⁷ The IAAF's rules allow any athlete who has not run for one country at senior level to turn out for another country of his/her choice. Local agents swarmed Rift Valley training camps and the Kenyan athletics belt of Iten, Nandi and Marakwet, targeting young runners for recruitment to become nationals of the two countries, leading, for example, to the Bahraini team of 10 runners at the 2015 World Junior Championships including three Kenyan-born teenage girls.³⁸ Ordinarily, decisions to change

citizenship are personal, but in the case of Kenyan runners it has involved monetary incentives for the runners and their parents.³⁹ The targeted runners are teenagers. Athletics Kenya officials might not have been complicit in the scheme but they are guilty of not having tight in-house rules to prevent the poaching of young Kenyan talent by other countries.

Doping

Kenya, once an epitome of clean running, is in the grip of an unprecedented doping scandal, with 19 positive tests and bans in the last two years alone.⁴⁰ The latest, involving Rita Jeptoo, a triple winner of the Boston and Chicago marathons, for the blood-boosting agent EPO, is the most prominent so far.⁴¹ Matthew Kisorio, the other elite runner to be banned, claimed that doping is widespread among Kenyan runners and that doping doctors have set up shop in Kenya's athletics belt for their business.⁴²

Jeptoo and Kisorio have not been the only high-profile African track stars to be banned for doping offences. Amantle Montsho, the former World and Commonwealth Games 400m champion, and South Africa's top sprinter, Simon Magakwe, were both banned in early 2015 for doping.⁴³ To combat this menace, Kenyan athletes, under the Professional Athletes Association of Kenya (PAAK), are running a campaign called Run Clean to educate each other, and especially young runners, about the dangers of doping.⁴⁴

The big event: the gravy train for joy riders

Major events are a main avenue of abuse and corruption in sport in Africa. The selection of national teams for the Olympics, the All-Africa Games, the Commonwealth Games and the World Athletics Championships is determined by meeting individually set qualifying marks. There are times, however,

when the respective federations have the discretion to pick an athlete or player through a wild card system. This is prone to abuse, as it can be used to favour or victimise athletes, or even to smuggle people. In 2003 a Kenyan volleyball player who thought she had been unfairly dropped from the All-Africa Games team publicly sought the intervention of the sports minister.⁴⁵

Delegations of African teams to these big events are always bloated, with officials of federations, and even government functionaries, further abusing such occasions by taking mistresses, friends and relatives along for the ride, all at the expense of the taxpayer.⁴⁶ In the case of Nigeria it was decided not to send a government delegation to the 2012 London Olympics, as reports said an anti-corruption investigation had been launched after government officials ran up a huge bill at the 2010 World Cup in South Africa.⁴⁷

It is clear that the belated appreciation by Africa's policy-makers of sport's economic and social value means that the continent's sport industry is much more vulnerable to corruption. Formulating policies on sport, even for countries with a rich sporting history such as Kenya, is only now occurring 50 years after independence. Corruption and governance issues in African sport are also criminal offences, and need to be understood as such. National federations need to work more closely with the police and other government agencies to protect the integrity of sport.

Fighting corruption and poor governance in sport can be helped by better and more insightful reporting. Sports journalism is viewed as the classical representation of the 'dumbing down' of news, with more emphasis on the entertainment and celebrity element for light reading.⁴⁸ This means that the weightier matters of corruption, doping, mismanagement and other vices in sport are often put on the backburner. There is a need for the mainstreaming of these issues in the media in order to help raise the

media profile of sports corruption.

Bearing in mind the viciousness and criminal nature of those involved in match-fixing and human

trafficking, those journalists who write on these issues are to be applauded for revealing the little that

they can. It is important that they are provided with the skills, equipment and incentives to be able to

continue reporting on corruption in sport, thus raising people's awareness of the problem.

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