

## “PASSION FOR THE GAME”

### EFP Sports Symposium Rheinfelden, June 7, 2008

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In conjunction with THE football event of the year, the Euro 2008, European Football Pool invited its membership to an educational sports gathering, ideal for business and networking. President Risto Nieminen opened this first EFP Symposium in the picturesque town of Rheinfelden near Basel, Switzerland together with the local mayor, Mr. Franco Mazzi.

The 30 delegates from 15 countries were given a thorough introduction to sports betting in the European Union by moderator Jean Jörgensen. He started off with a brief history on betting and the bookmakers and continued to outline the (economic) impact of lotteries in EU states on sports and society. He then took the participants on a journey through Europe to explain the legal issues and rules of monopolized lotteries and the EU's view on it.

#### Grassroots Football and the Regulated Lotteries

UEFA's member of the Executive Committee Per Ravn Omdal vowed the audience to raise the profile of Passion for the Game, i.e. by helping the communities to sponsor Mini-pitches, which again helps schools, clubs, local social societies and municipalities to spread the joy of football. It will help increase happiness, social integration, excitement, fascination, fair play, exercise and sports interest of children and the youth to make a slogan come true: *Football is for all*. Best example for that is Norway itself with close to 2,000 mini-pitches and their personal goal for 2016 is to have 4,000 mini-pitches in place, which is equivalent to one mini-pitch per school!

#### Sports Betting and the EU

Harri Syväsalmi, permanent representative of Finland at the EU in Brussels stated in his very honest and eye-opening presentation that the state lotteries in Europe need to increase their permanent representation in Brussels and to lobby much more intensively at the EU institutions to at least hold their present positions. As a comparison, private bookmakers are lobbying with a lot more manpower to gain votes for a deregulation of the lottery and sports betting market.

#### Player's rights and the fight against corruption

UEFA's head of the Legal Department, Peter Limacher, outlined the problems for UEFA on manipulation and corruption of the game from betting. UEFA does a lot for the fight against corruption and to protect the football values, e.g. partnerships and close cooperations with betting companies world wide as well as with FIFA's Early Warning System GmbH and by continued development of the disciplinary system and regulations.

There are several problems: UEFA is not a state authority and can just give hints, information and suggestions on what could be done and needs the governments to take the necessary action. UEFA can define what corruption means and what it doesn't, but for any solution, the European body will need help from outside.

Past figures have shown a substantial increase in reported manipulated games, interventions, investigations and convictions. The problem is that the investigations are rather complex because there are lots of parties involved (players, clubs, FA's, states, etc.). On the Internet and with live betting, corruption is an even bigger problem, where UEFA needs help and motivation from the state authorities and the betting companies.

#### Monitoring football for the good of the game

Both UEFA and FIFA have a great interest in safeguarding the men's most beloved sport. For that reason, both bodies have signed in recent years a memorandum of understanding with the National Lotteries via their European and respectively their World Association in order to detect corruption.

Danske Spil's head of sports betting, Jens Nielsen, explained on behalf of European Lotteries how their members cooperate with UEFA in monitoring all European matches. FIFA Early Warning System's (EWS) Wolfgang Feldner outlined the important steps to protect the integrity of sports in general and football in particular. To this end, FIFA has established its own entity which collects data about betting patterns across the world to detect any possible manipulations.

Jens Nielsen stated that each of their member lotteries as well as UEFA monitors the matches and the involved bets and keeps a permanent two-way communication to discover irregular betting patterns.

Wolfgang Feldner added that the increase in sport bets has a growing influence on the sport which is not always positive. In the end, however, criminal sanctions have to remain the responsibility of government authorities and cannot be part of the action of the sports associations.

FIFA's EWS is an important partner in the tough fight against match-fixing, etc. EWS is independent, neutral, without financial interest on the betting market and in close cooperation with FIFA, UEFA and the betting world. It seeks agreements with betting partners all over the world (400 partners), that define the duties and rights of bookmakers and associations. The two-way communication is a matter of secrecy and is secured and password protected. The bookmakers inform EWS about irregularity, EWS analyses the information and if necessary informs FIFA.

Further steps are to extend this monitoring to all FIFA associations and to develop and enhance the coaching of partners and to upgrade their network, with for example the IOC.

#### World class coach for dessert

As the one of the highlights of the symposium, a Q & A session between the audience and the day's top celebrity Roy Hodgson, former Swiss and Finnish National Coach and now coaching England's Premier League club Fulham FC, enabled interesting insights from a professional football coach regarding national teams, clubs and players of EFP member areas, the Premier and other Leagues and last but not least the chances of the hosting nations at the Euro 2008.

The detailed power point presentations from the symposium can be ordered from the EFP business office; [info@intertoto-cup.org](mailto:info@intertoto-cup.org).

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