

**TO THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN THE GAME AND  
ARE FIGHTING TO KEEP IT BEAUTIFUL.**

**The Insider's Guide to Match-Fixing in Football by Declan Hill**

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## PART THREE: THE SYSTEMS OF CORRUPTION

# FOREWORD

The front gate of the Nafplio medium-security prison is one of the new faces of international sport. There is a set of gates embedded in high concrete walls topped with barbed wire. Behind these gates is an empty yard and then another heavier, thicker steel door. The prison is in the Peloponnese area of Greece. It is a region soaked in history. King Agamemnon launched the Trojan War from his fortress 20 miles up the Peloponnesian valley at the back of the prison. There are medieval castles that dot the entire area, along with classical theatres and ancient ruins. When I visited in December 2011, the orange trees were in full bloom. The fruit, like globes of golden light that lit up the trees, were largely unpicked. The economic disaster of the Eurozone crisis had hit and in most cases it was not profitable for the farmers to pick their own crop.

I waited for hours at the front gate while the prison governor contemplated allowing me into the jail. Behind the walls there were, presumably, phone calls going back and forth to Athens, but in front there was a large crowd of families waiting to see their loved ones. They were an international lot. A concerned Greek father whose grave, bearded face made him look like a Platonic philosopher strode up and down the road. Next to him Roma children played happily in the dust. While a family of worried Afghan refugees begged the guards to let them bring in food.

When I was finally allowed into the prison, the crowd had left and it was darkening into a frozen, wet night. I was searched and then let me through the first gate. A cold rain swept across the deserted yard. The guard from the inside doors signalled and I walked into the prison.

As the heavy steel door clanged behind me, I was brought into a typically warm Greek welcome. The prison had been built to house a few hundred

men, but it was now crammed with twice as many inmates. However, the guards and prisoners had all the usual Greek charm. They shook my hand, offered me coffees and apologized for the long wait. There was a labour action going on inside the prison, the warders were protesting about the conditions and that had played a part in the slowness of the governor in allowing me into the prison.

I was escorted past more heavy doors, down a dingy corridor and into a long interrogation room. The walls of the room were discoloured and

In the last

The second part of the book *The People of the Game* is about the people

The book is an attempt to identify what are





would do for his club. You understand? But I have never done anything on the gambling market with Asian bookmakers.”

I was not sure if Beos meant that he had fixed games, but not to profit on the gambling market, or merely indulged in a benign form of creative accountancy. When I asked, he shrugged again and stated that he loved his team and would never do anything criminal.

There is no judicially-approved evidence that Beos fixed any matches. He was, finally, released on bail seven months later. At the time of publication, his trial has been delayed as neither he nor his accusers showed up in court, and all charges against him are unproven.

This is the danger for sport: that potentially innocent people and innocent matches will automatically be assumed to be corrupt. That no longer will the fans assume that they have witnessed unbelievable accomplishments, but they will simply not believe in sport anymore. They will give up on football. It will be abandoned as lacking in credibility to be replaced by a sport that has better protected its integrity.

In the years since I began researching this topic, much has changed. At the beginning of the work, it was difficult to get much attention to the rising danger to international sports. Now — world-wide — there are over thirty national police investigations into match-corruption: more than a thousand sports events are alleged to have been fixed and hundreds of players, coaches and officials have been arrested. More seriously, there have been dozens of suspicious deaths and a series of tragic suicides linked to this phenomenon. There is no sign that this tide of corruption is slowing. Rather it may be getting worse. The research for this book was, obviously, at times difficult and dangerous: but I hope it may help to prevent the spread of