

Don't bet on it! We can't anymore – Stuart Fuller

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In late June ex-Whitehawk defender Michael Boateng was found guilty trying to fix Non-League matches and sentenced to 16 months in jail. Boateng is the latest player to be caught up in the murky world of match and spot fixing allegations, where the defence is often to plead ignorance of the law.

Up until a few weeks ago anyone related to the playing side or management of Lewes FC could bet on any football around the world, apart from on the competitions we took part in. So obviously, no betting on Ryman League games and who would win the title. It also included a ban on betting on ANY FA Cup games, as we take part in that competition. So despite the fact we were eliminated last season by Sutton United back in October, we weren't allowed to bet on any aspect of the Arsenal versus Hull City final in May. We, in this case means any player, manager, coach, kit man, club secretary, general manager or director.

Only a small percentage of people actually knew the rules comprehensively and so a number of cases have arisen where ambiguity surrounding someone's involvement in a club, or simple ignorance of the extent of the law were the main forms of defensive. Despite their efforts to educate the footballing world in England, it was clear the legislation had to change.

The Tottenham winger Andros Townsend, Newcastle's Dan Gosling – who is to join Bournemouth next season – and Cameron Jerome, who played on loan at Crystal Palace from Stoke last season, are among those to have been found to have breached current betting regulations, as reported in The Guardian, as well as ex-Tranmere Rovers manager, Ronnie Moore, who was sacked last season after an investigation.

So as of Friday 1st August this year, a worldwide ban on betting on football came into force for certain participants in English football. The statement issued by the FA earlier in the summer is certainly very clear:-

"Included within the worldwide prohibition ratified by The FA shareholders' 111th Annual General Meeting at Wembley Stadium on Wednesday are all those involved in the game at Premier League, Football League and Football Conference levels, as well as the top two divisions in each of the Northern, Southern and Isthmian leagues.

Participants covered by the ban will be prohibited from betting, either directly or indirectly, on any football match or competition that takes place anywhere in the world"

The changes to the rules will also effect a worldwide prohibition on betting on any other football-related matter. For example, the transfer of players, employment of managers or team selection. The passing of inside information to somebody that uses the information for betting or asking others to bet on your behalf remains prohibited.

Following consultation with the game's stakeholders, the prohibition had previously received a unanimous recommendation by The FA Council on 9 April and The Football Regulatory Authority in March.

Currently, FA Rules state that no participant can bet on a match or competition in which they are involved that season, or which they can influence, or any other football-related matter concerning the league that they play in.

They also prohibit participants from using or passing inside information for betting. These current prohibitions will be retained after 1 August 2014 in respect of participants involved in the game below Step 4 of the National League System. These are the only participants who will not be subject to the worldwide ban.

One view of this new law is that it is a sledge hammer to crack a peanut - banning players at our level from betting on La Liga, Serie A or even the J-League where they have no knowledge at all, but the FA had to draw a line somewhere. A blanket ban is the simplest and most effective way to ensure everyone knows the rules. Quite how it can be monitored and policed is another story. It takes seconds to set up an online betting account, with little verified information required. There is no onus on the betting companies to authenticate whether the gambler is allowed to bet at all.

Interestingly, there is no comparable legislation in other sports. First class cricket has been tainted in recent years by high profile court cases where players have been accused and found guilty of match and spot fixing, yet there are no comparable regulations in the game.

The world has officially gone mad.