

'Match-Fixing' Can it become a thing of the past?

By Gareth A Davies

Match-fixing in polo could become a thing of the past, thanks to an innovative system devised in the British Open this year. According to the management at Cowdray Park, there was wholehearted agreement from officials, patrons - all except one - and especially the players, that the change of format for this year's Gold Cup meant that any 'match-fixing' was ruled out.

'Match-fixing' in polo is unlike that which has been written about in national newspapers and involves bookmakers, but 'throwing' matches has, and does, happen in polo. The practice in polo has largely been where teams do not need to win matches, and can 'throw' them with no cost to their team losing.

It might not be in the realms of illegality, involving sums of money passing through bookmakers hands, but it clearly should not be prevalent at any level in a professional sport. The Tournament Committee deserve high praise for the move.

This year, the British Open began with five groups of three teams. An order of merit was established, based on the two games played in the league phase. These were played according to the Blue Book Annex E page 293. The merit table was based on, firstly, points, then net goals and thirdly, gross goals.

In the event of there still being a tie, the Tournament Committee used a toss of the coin in

the presence of a representative of each team involved to establish the order of merit.

The first team in the order of merit had a bye through to the quarter finals. This year, it was Dubai, on account of their 33 goals in the group stages, with victories over Talandracas 18 - 4, and Cadenza, 15 - 10. The remaining 14 teams played a knockout round to establish the remaining seven quarter finalists. The second placed team played the 15th placed team, 3rd v 14th, and so on. The quarter finalists were drawn at random, publicly, so that no team would know in advance who they would play. Re-matches from the league phase were avoided.

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