

Six match-fixing footballers jailed, fined

Six match-fixing football players with a former S-League club were jailed and fined after pleading guilty, news reports said Wednesday.

The Chinese nationals each acknowledged accepting between 1,200 Singapore dollars (\$839) and 4,000 Singapore dollars (\$2,797) from team manager Wang Xin to throw games last year. Wang has since absconded.

Li Xuebai, 30, Li Zheng, 26, Deng Lei, 26, Peng Zhiyi, 22, and Tong Di, 26, were each sentenced Tuesday to five months in jail. The sixth player, Wang Lin, 20, was sentenced to four months in jail, The Straits Times said.

The seven alleged conspirators were the largest group convicted in a corruption scandal since the league's inception in 1996.

Their passports were impounded in November when the investigation began.

The seven were hauled to court Feb 6 to face 24 counts of bribery amounting to 27,950 Singapore dollars (\$19,545) accepted for deliberately losing six matches with the Liaoning Guangyuan club.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Chay Yuen Fatt told the court that the club finished in 10th place in the league.

Investigations showed that Wang Xin, who had the authority to hire and fire players, placed football bets through another Chinese national for certain matches, the report said. The bets were placed online at a China betting website.

He then approached players individually, asking them to lose the match by a certain number of goals in return for bribes.

The sentencing court took into account the pressure the players were under, defence counsel Raymond Lye told the newspaper. They 'had no choice of their own, including the number of matches fixed'.

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