

JAILED: Thanasegar went on the run for two years before he was nabbed in Malaysia in August last year and brought back to Singapore to stand trial.

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Match fixer gets 2 years' jail

Former Malaysian footballer Thanasegar sentenced for his role in trying to fix MSL match



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He helped to bribe a football referee with up to RM15,000 (\$5,600) before fleeing Singapore in 2012.

Yesterday, former Malaysian footballer Thanasegar S. Sinnaiah, 40, was jailed 24 months.

In sentencing, District Judge Siva Shanmugam said that match fixing undermines the public good of sports and football in particular.

Thanasegar's alleged accomplice, Selvarajan Letchuman, 52, a Singaporean, has also been arrested and his case is pending.

The referee, Shokri Nor, 50, a former Malaysian policeman, is still on the run.

Court papers said Thanasegar, who used to play for the Kedah state team, and Shokri were from the same hometown in Malaysia.

Thanasegar got to know Selvarajan through mutual friends in 1997.

On May 18, 2012, Selvarajan phoned Thanasegar, who was then in Kedah, and asked for tips for the Malaysian Super League (MSL) match between LionsXII and Sarawak that was to take place four days later at the Jalan Besar Stadium in Singapore.

After Thanasegar told him that Shokri was the referee, Selvarajan arranged for the three of them to meet at a hotel room in Penang the next day.

That was when Selvarajan told Shokri that the LionsXII must beat Sarawak by at least three goals, the court heard.

He told the referee to award penalties to make it a high-scoring match and to issue yellow and red cards to the Sarawak players.

Selvarajan also said he would be betting on the match with Singapore Pools and Shokri would stand to earn RM15,000 (S\$5,600) from the payout. Shokri agreed to do his bidding.

On May 22, just hours before kick-off, Selvarajan placed six bets at two Singapore Pools outlets. One of them was a \$5,000 bet that the LionsXII would win

by at least two goals, which would have paid out \$10,500.

But the trio were arrested before the match and the fix was not carried out.

The game ended in a 3-0 win for LionsXII.

That same week, Thanasegar and Shokri were hauled to court, charged and given \$50,000 bail.

While out on bail, Thanasegar slipped out of Singapore by hiding in the boot of a car. Shokri had earlier fled Singapore.

Thanasegar went on the run for two years before he was nabbed in Malaysia in August last year and brought back to Singapore to stand trial.

GUILTY

In January this year, he pleaded guilty to abetting a conspiracy to fix the MSL match, two charges of abetting a conspiracy to cheat Singapore Pools by betting on a fixed match and one count of failing to present his passport when leaving Singapore. Four other charges were taken into consideration.

His lawyer, Mr Rakesh Vasu, said in mitigation that his client has been suffering from a heart condition for more than eight years.

He said that Thanasegar was not the mastermind of the plan and had merely helped arrange a meeting between Selvarajan and Shokri.

Yesterday, Judge Siva said that sports builds and binds communities and conveys ideals, values and norms to participants and fans.

The fixing of football matches would destroy the credibility of the sport as well as erode public support and endanger the patronage of commercial sponsors, he added.

The Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB) said in a press release yesterday that Singapore has always adopted a zero-tolerance approach towards corruption and match fixing will not be condoned.

It said it "works closely with the Football Association of Singapore, the authorities and our counterparts to keep the local soccer scene clean".