

Bookmakers say special Betting Markets here to Stay

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Bookmakers in Europe have strongly denied rumours that the specialized odds such as "who will win the first corner" or "who will win the first booking" in a soccer game could be limited.

The Times newspaper of London has published a story claiming that the UK's Gambling Commission is looking into restricting betting markets that could be manipulated by players.

The story discusses markets such as the number of wides bowled in a cricket game, the first yellow card or number of corners in a football match or whether the first try of a rugby match will be converted. UK bookies hit back over claims of match fixing.

"There is a little bit of paranoia about this, with everyone believing people are cleaning up on these markets," said Ladbrokes spokesman Robin Hutchison.

"Bookmakers across the land lay dozens of these every day and big bets, or dodgy bets, stick out like a sore thumb.

"We certainly wouldn't hesitate to let the governing body of the relevant sport know if we thought something was wrong."

Graham Sharpe of William Hill was equally dismissive.

"It is of no benefit to bookmakers to offer markets that they think could be open to abuse. We are the ones taking the risk. We have never refused to co-operate with regulatory bodies or to draw any irregularities to their attention."

The commission is believed to be examining the types of bets bookmakers are allowed to lay and also to set up an independent results service to rule on how bets should be settled rather than leaving it to individual firms' rules.

Any legislation would also affect the Betting exchanges.

Betfair.com spokesman Tony Calvin said: "We don't offer a lot of markets of this kind because the rules have to be watertight for backer and layer.

"I don't feel that a market on the number of corners in a match has any great integrity risk, but the time of the first corner might, as the spread firms have found."

Betfair.com operate memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with 25 governing bodies to help draw attention to suspicious betting patterns.