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25th October 2010 - IFA – Player's Agents

Zurich - Soccer's governing body FIFA has been told that it risks "total chaos" with the planned new rules for players' agents, which are expected to come into force next year. FIFA plans to hand responsibility for controlling agents to clubs and national associations but was warned at the International Football Arena (IFA) conference in Zurich that it is simply passing the buck.

Omar Ongaro, head of Players' Status and Governance at FIFA's legal division, said that under the new system, agents would no longer need a license to operate and would have merely to register with each transaction. He said that FIFA would also place a cap on agents' commission, restricting it to 3 percent of the value of the transfer fee. At present, only licensed agents, lawyers or close relatives can represent players in transfers.

"What will change is that the intermediary will not have a license, there will be no jurisdiction of FIFA and responsibility will be shifted to the clubs," Ongaro said. "Instead of a license, there will be a registration system." He said it was hoped to have the new rules in force by October next year.

Rob Jansen, president of the European Football Agents' Associations, warned that the removal of licensing could lead to a free-for-all. "What we think will happen will be total chaos," he said. "We think FIFA is fed up with the administration of the problem and that they are giving the problem back to the countries, the clubs and the players." Internally, everyone agrees this is not the best solution." He added: "When there is a problem with people robbing banks, the solution is not to close banks but this is what is happening here."

"Our suggestion was not to stop licensing but to make it stronger," said Jansen, adding that there should be greater transparency in transfers. He also said it was wrong to imagine that all agents were earning large fortunes dealing with multi-million dollar deals involving world famous players.

"The big money is with a small group. There are thousands and thousands of footballers and when people represent average players, they have to work very hard for them."

Bernhard Heusler, vice-president of Swiss Super League club FC Basel, said clubs could not afford the luxury of vetting an agent if they really wanted a player. "It's not realistic to believe we can regulate the chaos," he said. "If you want the clubs to be responsible for the agent, that shifts a lot of burden."



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Heusler added that some agents overstepped their role as intermediaries. "They understand themselves as owners in certain parts of the world. That's a big problem to resolve."

Former Swiss international Raphael Wicky recalled his career, saying it took various attempts -- including an unsuccessful period when he was represented by his father -- before he found the right agent. "Then I found someone who had a very trustful relationship - that is very important for the player: you find someone you can trust, who is transparent with the deal," he said.

He said that employing relatives may only work well if the player is well-known. "It's quite easy in that case for a brother or sister, because everyone wants the player. But if it's an average player, you need someone who knows the business and has contacts because the clubs will not run after them."

At the end, Jansen said he believed, that in spite of everything, the problems could be ironed out. "We have to consider how to handle this;" he said. "If the attitude is right from all parties, we will find a solution."



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