

LEARNING CURVE **PERSPECTIVE**
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MANY are not shocked at the recent scandals surrounding FIFA. Iconic figures — who have made a name for themselves, and are adored by millions all over the world, especially youngsters of impressionable age — have been implicated.

One of the recent sporting incidents of epic proportion is the case of Lance Armstrong who had been under suspicions of doping ever since he won the 1999 Tour de France.

After his fall from grace, a CNN article highlighted an “epic downfall” that “stands out in the history of professional sports”.

Similar to the FIFA case where the FBI of the United States triggered a three-year investigation into the body, the US Anti-Doping

Agency came to the conclusion in 2012 that Armstrong had deceived the world in what was described as “the most sophisticated, professionalised and successful doping programme that sport has ever seen”.

Armstrong is facing a lifetime ban from competing in all sports. His sports career was cut short. A year later, he confessed to the doping charges.

The body responsible for running world football has long been alleged as corrupt. Doubts were cast over the transparency in the allocation of the 2018 and 2022 World Cup events to Russia and Qatar respectively, among others. To make it worse, US lost the bids.

More than 10 top officials had been implicated when the newly re-elected president for the fifth term, Joseph Blatter, decided to resign, citing that he is innocent. It is said that the noose is also tight-

ening around him too.

Before the dust has settled over the FIFA case, another sports-related scandal was revealed by *The Daily Mail* of the United Kingdom on June 6. This time it involves a famous brand name for sportswear implicating it “in financial machinations”.

According to the US authorities, an intermediary working with the company allegedly paid tens of millions of pounds to a Swiss bank account as “bribes and kickbacks” in a 1999 deal to sponsor the Brazilian national football team.

The news report claimed that the company has also been accused of behaving like an “oppressive, greedy corporation”.

Last year alone, it earned £65.5 million (RM380 million), and made profits of £10.1 million. “A big chunk of that would have come from the 2014 England World Cup shirts” carrying the brand name

All that glitters is not gold

sold at an “eye-watering price tag”.

The company was allegedly linked to sweatshops in Indonesia which paid a dismal amount to the workers for making the shirts.

In the 1990s, there were allegations that factories in Cambodia and Pakistan employed child labour to make the branded football.

The BBC showed the exploitation of girls who “all worked for 16 hours a day, seven days a week”.

In 2011, despite a pledge to end the reliance on sweatshops, nothing much has changed today.

Last year, workers in China launched big strikes — some said the biggest in China — to protest the poor working conditions as well as the pay at the factory which makes the branded footwear.

The conditions are in sharp contrast to the way the company “showers millions of pounds on

already wealthy sports stars” regardless of whether he/she behaves in a manner that brings disrepute.

The FIFA World Cup — the most-watched sporting event in the world, even bigger than the Olympics — has lost the credibility to promote “the beautiful game”. One of its vendors, too, is not in the most trusted position, raising suspicions of its unethical behaviour when it comes to the millions of dollars in revenue from corporate and other sponsors, broadcasting rights and merchandising.

Far from winning, FIFA and the related company continue to lose something that money cannot buy — dignity.

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