

**REPORT OF SPECIAL INVESTIGATOR
INTO ALLEGATIONS OF ATTEMPTED MATCHFIXING
FOR 2021 EURO CUP FINALS**

SUBMITTED BY

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WITNESS INTERVIEW SUMMARIES

The various witnesses who could be identified as potentially having information relating to this investigation were interviewed over the Zoom/Teams platform. The order below is not the order in which they were interviewed but this section summarizes the basic information they provided.

At the start of their interviews, each witness was admonished to 1) tell the truth, and 2) maintain as confidential the contents of their interview sessions. Each witness agreed to tell the truth and to maintain the interview as confidential. To the extent a second interview was needed, the witness was reminded of these obligations and asked to reconfirm their commitment to them, which they did.

The summaries set forth below necessarily include only the facts discussed that have a bearing on or are relevant to the findings and recommendations of the Investigator. Necessarily, more than is set forth below was discussed but not everything had a direct effect on the outcome here.

Boris Ryzhyk

Mr Ryzhyk was interviewed twice and spoke himself, without the aid of an interpreter.

Mr Ryzhyk became a FIBA referee in 1997. When Euroleague Basketball started, Mr Ryzhyk was an official in it from the beginning. In the Ukrainian basketball federation, he has been head of refereeing for 8 years, a member of its board, and a referee. As a result of the Russian incursion, he moved to Spain where he now lives.

He viewed Mr Ambrosov as a friend and like a “pupil” to him as a young up and coming referee from Ukraine, but in September 2021 everything “turned upside down.” He and Mr Ambrosov, in early 2021, would speak or text nearly every day.

He does “not remember” directing Mr Ambrosov to make contact with Mr Koromilas and Mr Ryzhyk “absolutely” never had anyone contact him to influence the outcome of the Event. Mr Ryzhyk said he never told Mr Ambrosov that if he directed the Event for Unics Kazan he would be paid 10,000 Euros.

“Lies” are how he characterized what Mr Ambrosov said to the media, as “revenge” against Mr Ryzhyk for what had happened in the Ukrainian basketball federation concerning the allegations, investigation, and later suspension of Mr Ambrosov for taking money from officials in return for giving good assignments or advancing their careers.

Mr Ryzhyk would message Mr Ambrosov “a lot”, but just deleted him and the messages when he started to have problems with Mr Ambrosov over the money. Ryzhyk acknowledged that he kept Mr Ambrosov's money “because he lied to me.”

Mr Ryzhyk was shown the following text exchange, first only in Russian, and he was asked to translate it and he said initially that he could not translate the sentence beginning “They just fell short . . .”:

BORIS RYZHYK
+38067XXXXXXXXX

28 April 2021

+30 694 XXXXXXXX Elias 10:48

30 April 2021

Kalimera 10:42

It is a 10-day trip package there 10:43

Good luck!!! 15:55

Well, dear, God be with me 15:54

Am going to the court 15:54

/emoji of two palms/ 15:55

Watched the whole game, was worried like it was me!!! You refereed very very well.

The game was extremely hard!!! They just fell short by a very, very little bit... Shit...

You did well!! 20:04

He was asked to explain what the last message meant in English that was written in Russian and he said:

"I watched the game. I was worried myself. You refereed well. Was very tough game. They were short a little bit. You are ok."

He was asked what "kalimera" meant when he sent it apparently just days after sending Mr Koromilas' phone number to Mr Ambrosov, and Mr Ryzhyk said it is Greek for saying "hi". He does not recall why he would use a Greek work with Mr Ambrosov. He also had no recollection what his reference to the 10-day package was about.

He does not remember sending these messages nor does he recall what he meant by them. In particular, in the Investigator's view, he was evasive in his efforts to put certain aspects of the text messages into English, at one point skipping a word and in another failing to include a pronoun. In his first interview he said he could not testify the Russian words that amounted to "they fell short", and it was only in his second interview when confronted with the translation that he contested the meaning.

He was asked to provide a copy of or access to his Viber account and he claimed to have no record of this and not to have his Viber account with him.

He stated unequivocally that he did not try to make contact with Mr Ambrosov after the allegations were made public about the Event and that he could not find Mr Ambrosov's phone number because he had deleted it when the troubles had started with the bank account.

He views Mr Koromilas as his colleague referee in Euroleague Basketball and they had refereed together but he was not "not really social with him." Mr Koromilas called Mr Ryzhyk after the allegations about the Event were made public and they spoke several times about their collective shock about the allegations and the fact that Mr Ryzhyk knew nothing about this occurring at the time. Mr Ryzhyk also stated that he learned about the story from Mr Koromilas.

Shortly after the allegations were made public, Mr Ryzhyk contacted the Euroleague head of officiating, Mr Daniel Hierrezuelo, who reported that Mr Koromilas had called him before Mr Ryzhyk did. Mr Ryzhyk stated that Mr Hierrezuelo told Mr Ryzhyk not to worry, that he trusted them.

In his second interview, Mr Ryzhyk stood by his view that he heard about the allegations concerning the Event from Mr Koromilas. He was asked to translate the text messages again and omitted the word “they” from the ___ sentence, so it should read “just was very very short” and he could not understand why the official interpreters would use the word “they” there. He would not interpret until pushed the final word of that text, which was a Russian exclamation for “shit” or “goddamn” and he did not recall using this exclamation about the Event. He said he had no view on the outcome of the Event. He stood by his statement that he does not remember writing any of this series of text messages, which meant that he could not be asked what he intended by it. He continued to say he had no contact and not attempted to have any contact with Mr Ambrosov after the media reports emerged, yet when shown the screenshot of Mr Ambrosov's call log in early August he could not explain why he would have appeared there as having called Mr Ambrosov. Most importantly, Mr Ryzhyk never disputed the accuracy of the text messages (aside from minor wording disputes in the end) or phone log screen shots.

Ilias Koromilas

Mr Koromilas was interviewed twice. Mr Koromilas spoke himself, without the aid of an interpreter.

Mr Koromilas had been a national referee in Greece since 1992 and then was a FIBA referee for 2006-07. He joined Euroleague Basketball as an official in 2008.

He stated that he was aware that the coach and assistant coach for Unics Kazan were both Greek, but he had no relations off court with them.

Mr Koromilas denied ever offering a bribe to Mr Ambrosov or discussing that with Mr Ryzhyk, and he stated that in all of his years of officiating no one had offered him a bribe or asked him to bribe anyone. Until he saw the allegations here in the European press, he was unaware of any bribe issue for the Event. He was “shocked” about the allegations and to see his name involved. He called Mr Ryzhyk who said he already knew about the allegations and Mr Koromilas asked him why Mr Ryzhyk did not inform him. Mr Ryzhyk reminded him that Mr Ambrosov was out of Ukrainian basketball and Euroleague Basketball because of corruption allegations in Ukraine. Mr Koromilas claimed that Mr Ryzhyk said that he knew or found out that the online interview of Mr Ambrosov was given June 4, 2023.

Mr Koromilas was very clear, and unambiguous, in his first interview in stating that:

1. He had Mr Ambrosov's phone number in the past because all referee phone numbers were sent to Euroleague Basketball referees;
2. He never discussed with anyone the fact of the Unics Kazan coach and assistant being Greek;
3. He was unaware of any texts mentioning him at the time;
4. His mobile number in April 2021 was the same as now and he confirmed that number;
5. He did not make any request to have anyone officiate corruptly at the Event; and
6. He has not attempted to make contact with Mr Ambrosov “for a lot of years” and made no effort to call him after the media story broke about Mr Ambrosov's interview and allegations on the Event.

In his second interview, he confirmed that the word “kalimera” was Greek for good morning. He stated that he had made a search of his call log and did not find any call to Mr Ambrosov, that his iPhone automatically deletes his call log after a few days, and he did not call Mr Ambrosov after the media reports had come out in early August (just days before his interviews with the Investigator). Until he was confronted with Mr Ambrosov's call log, he continued to deny that he had made a call to Mr Ambrosov after the media story was released. He said he had no reason to call him.

After being confronted with the call log of Mr Ambrosov, Mr Koromilas said it must have been a mistaken call by him and then he said that he had tried to get Mr Ambrosov's address for his lawyer because he got his lawyer involved after the interview was released and he must have hit call instead of just getting the address. He continued to maintain that he had no call logs of his own available to provide. Mr Koromilas stated that he had no reason to believe Mr Ambrosov's call log was inaccurate.

On 18 September 2023, while this investigation was pending but after his interviews, Euroleague Basketball was informed that Mr Koromilas had retired from basketball officiating, including for Euroleague Basketball.

ANALYSIS/FINDINGS

The Investigator finds it wholly unbelievable that Mr Ryzhyk could not recall a series of text messages about such a significant issue as was alleged about the Event, where he had expressed strong feelings, contemporaneous with the Event, about one team in the event, to his then friend, who made allegations about such text messages public. He also was unable to explain why he communicated with a Greek word when that was not his usual habit, and he had no explanation for his reference to a 10-day trip package. This demonstrates at the very least a lack of cooperation in the investigation. This appears to be a violation of section 19(g) of the Disciplinary Regulations.

The Investigator finds that Mr Ryzhyk attempted to mislead the Investigator when he stated that he had not called Mr Ambrosov after the news story about the Event broke in the Greek and European media, but Mr Ambrosov's phone records show otherwise. It is simply unbelievable that he could forget having made such a call at the time the story broke a mere few days before he was interviewed, in a matter that had made Mr Ryzhyk the subject of international and domestic, and basketball-specific, media attention. This appears to be a violation of the Disciplinary Regulations section 19(g) as well.

The Investigator finds that Mr Ryzhyk attempted to mislead the Investigator when he was asked to interpret his own text messages contemporaneous with the Event, by attempting to read out the pronoun and object of one sentence and by minimizing the meaning of “suka” in Russian, so that the interpretation would have a more favourable slant for Mr Ryzhyk. Those things taken together indicate that Mr Ryzhyk had a much stronger interest in the outcome of the Event than he denied during his interview. This appears to be a violation of the Disciplinary Regulations section 19(g) as well.

The Investigator finds that Mr Koromilas attempted to mislead the Investigator when he stated that he had not called Mr Ambrosov after the news story about the Event broke in the Greek and European media, but Mr Ambrosov's phone records show otherwise. It is simply unbelievable that he could forget having made such a call at the very time the story broke, a story the facts of which he vehemently denied and about which he said he was in “shock”, a mere days before he was interviewed. He attempted to “fix” the failure in his memory by alleging other possible scenarios for the call appearing on Mr Ambrosov's call log, including that he dialled it in error when attempting to provide Mr Ambrosov's information to his lawyers and asserted that his iPhone automatically deleted call logs which he was not able to establish for the Investigator. This appears to be a violation of Disciplinary Regulations section 19(g). It does not help the perception of Mr Koromilas' that in the middle of this investigation he resigned from officiating Euroleague Basketball and Greek events (though he would say the latter was caused by the imposition by the Greek federation rule prohibiting referees over 50 being appointed).

I remain at your disposal to further assist Euroleague Basketball in this matter or to answer any questions from Euroleague Basketball concerning the contents of this report.

JEFFREY G. BENZ
London
23 September 2023