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Page : 8



# Don't let scammers score in this World Cup

FOR the next few weeks, many of us will be living on football time.

We will stay up later, argue over line-ups, celebrate goals scored by countries we have never visited and turn ordinary nights into family occasions.

Living rooms, coffee shops and mamak stalls will be filled with people who may disagree on many things but join in one voice to say that a beautiful goal is a beautiful goal.

That is part of the magic of the World Cup. It gives everyone a break, an escape from work, bills, politics and the daily bad news.

But wherever people gather, online scammers will be lurking, taking every opportunity to profit from any event.

They know that football fans become less careful when a match is about to begin, and offer "free" live streams or promise winning tips to bet on a team that "cannot

possibly lose".

This always happens during a major event. Scammers use festivals, disasters, government aid, job openings, tax deadlines and popular concerts as opportunities to prey on their victims.

The World Cup gives them plenty of opportunities to make money.

There will be counterfeit jerseys, bogus prize draws and tips promising big wins for a small fee.

Some sites also look identical to genuine websites offering such bets, while others may ask users to download apps, scan QR codes or enter their bank details or e-wallet information to "stream" live games.

The football may never appear, and by the time the victim realises that they have been duped, the money may already be gone.

There is also online betting.

It often begins as harmless fun: RM10 on the winner, a small wager between friends or free credit offered by an online agent.

The advertisements look exciting and they show winners, not those who lose their salaries, borrow money or spend the night trying to win back what they have lost.

A loss becomes a reason to bet again. A win becomes proof that the next bet will be another success. A person betting will no longer watch "The Beautiful Game" simply for the joy, as every pass, corner and yellow card becomes a financial calculation.

Illegal betting platforms are even more dangerous because there is no real protection when things go wrong.

An operator can refuse to pay, freeze an account, demand another deposit or disappear entirely.

Some "agents" are simply col-

lecting transfers into personal bank accounts. Others may use their customers' personal details for further scams.

Be wary of so-called experts who offer advice and claim to have insider information on fixed matches or guaranteed tips.

There is no guaranteed result in a football match.

If there is a secret formula for making a profit, why sell it to strangers through social media?

This is a good time for families to talk openly, especially with younger people, about the dangers of online gambling and scams.

Explain how the tricks work and how scammers look for people to prey on.

Advise them not to share passwords, reveal their banking codes, install unknown betting or streaming apps, or transfer money to online strangers.

And when someone gets cheated, do not ridicule them. Shame helps the scammer by keeping their victims silent.

Act quickly, contact the bank and report the matter to the police. This can help the victim and protect others.

The World Cup should leave us with memories of goals, laughter, missed sleep and time spent together. It should not leave a family with debt, a stolen bank account or a loved one trapped in gambling.

Enjoy the matches and support your team.

Tease your friends when their predictions are wrong or their team loses, but let the final whistle end the game.

Don't allow the excitement to follow you into a betting site, a suspicious link or a decision you may regret long after the tournament is over.