

The image shows a hand pointing at a central digital globe. The globe is surrounded by a complex network of white lines and circular icons, each containing a stylized human figure. The background is dark blue with a grid pattern. The word 'holmesglen' is written in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font in the top right corner.

holmesglen

HOLMESGLEN INSTITUTIONAL REPOSITORY (HIR)

Duncan, S., Ruihley, B.J., & Yüce, A. (2024). Sports gambling and the media: Communicating the odds. In P. M. Pedersen (Ed.), *Routledge handbook of sport communication* (2nd ed., pp. 424-440).
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003430278>



CRICOS Provider Code: 00012G. RTO: 416
B2130518 Document Repository Cov

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Communicating the Odds:

How Sports Betting Became Part of Sports Broadcasting

Introduction

Never have sports and gambling been more intertwined. Changing laws, enhanced digital applications, a smartphone in every pocket, an unquenchable thirst for revenue by multiple parties, and clever, targeted marketing have made betting on sports easier, faster, and more tempting than ever before. While the relationship between sports, gambling companies, and the media has driven significant revenue for all stakeholders, it has also changed the way fans engage and interact with sports and altered the sports package, which now includes an abundance of gambling messages communicated through a range of integrated techniques within and around live coverage of sports.

Since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned a federal ban on commercial sports betting in most of the country in 2018, 38 states and the District of Columbia have allowed some form of sports betting. Twenty-nine of those states permit wagering online. This has led to a boom in sports gambling, with an estimated 50.4 million American sports fans gambling on the 2023 Super Bowl (Russell, 2023). However, while the notion of sports gambling in the U.S. is still relatively novel, in other countries, such as Australia and many European countries, it is far more entrenched, having been legalized in the 1980s (Russell, 2023). Estimates highlight that Australians lose approximately \$25 billion (AUD) on legal forms of gambling each year, representing the largest per capita losses in the world (AIHW, 2023). Thus, for better or worse, Australia is a world leader in integrating gambling into sports.

This chapter explores the nexus of sports, betting, and the media, using Australia as a case study to examine how sports betting has been integrated into the coverage of live sports and other sports-related programming. The chapter also discusses how sports gambling marketing and advertisements have impacted the experience of watching sports through an

Australian lens of 40 years of legalized sports gambling. It also examines the government's role in regulating sports betting and broadcast integration in response to community concerns about the 'gamblification' of sport (McMullan & Miller, 2008).

Understanding the Nexus: The Interplay Between Sports, Media, and Sports Betting

Throughout history, sports events have always found a prime place in the media, being presented to the largest audiences. Sports and media have created a symbiotic relationship with the development of media tools and industry dynamics. However, sports betting has recently become significantly integrated into this process (Lopez-Gonzalez & Griffiths, 2018). New media formats and technological advancements have made sports events more accessible to even wider audiences, and sports betting, once limited due to certain legal regulations and societal norms, has become a central element of the this industry (Breveers et al., 2022; Lopez-Gonzalez & Griffiths, 2018).

The expanding opportunities for participation in sports betting have made it more increasingly popular. Consequently, sports betting has become a prevalent force, adding additional dynamism to the duo of sports and media, and can be considered a third force in this context. In this regard, it can be stated that sports, media, and betting have created a complex interaction network shaping the modern sports scene, turning sports into an event consisting of competitions, entertainment, marketing, and gambling (Etuk, 2022; Lopez-Gonzalez et al., 2021). This interaction, influencing today's sports culture and creating a different social ecosystem, is said to shape the audience experience by increasing collaboration between significant sports events, media, and the betting industries. Accordingly, exploring the interplay between sports, media, and betting is crucial for enriching the audience experience and understanding the future of the sports industry.

Everyone Is a Winner: The Commercial and Financial Benefits

The organic partnership between sports and betting has added new dynamics to sports competitions and elevated sports betting to one of the fundamental positions in the sports industry, bringing significant commercial and financial advantages for all stakeholders. The increasing supply and demand for sports betting have enabled diversification, structural changes, and global growth of the sports betting market (Deutscher et al., 2019; Hajek et al., 2023). According to Statista, the global sports betting industry reached a market size of \$242 billion in 2022 and is forecasted to grow at a compound annual rate of 10.3% from 2023 to 2030 (Statista, 2023). This advancement in sports betting has also brought opportunities in advertising and sponsorships. Organizations are hurrying to take their share of this gold rush before it is too late.

Sports betting companies make significant financial contributions by collaborating with major sports events, national and international leagues, and sports clubs (Hajek et al., 2023; Houghton et al., 2020). These collaborations, based on a win-win strategy, increase the revenues of sports organizations, making them more competitive and sustainable, and provide opportunities for betting companies to promote their products and services directly and indirectly within the context of sports marketing (Houghton et al., 2020; Lopez-Gonzalez, 2021). One of the most significant transformations and impacts of sports betting has occurred in sports broadcasting. These transformations, focusing on broadcast content, presentation, and viewer engagement, include incorporating dramatically increased betting-related content in sports broadcasts and discussions of betting odds and probabilities by sports commentators (Killick & Griffiths, 2023; Lopez-Gonzalez et al., 2018b).

Moreover, betting options can enhance interest in certain sports and specific competitions, facilitating audience attention and offering various interactive experiences (Etuk, 2022; Killick & Griffiths, 2021). Sports betting contains various motivations that can increase people's interest in a sports event (Gökce Yüce et al., 2022). A sports event with

betting options increases viewers' excitement and allows advertisers to expand their potential customer base. In this context, integrating betting into sports events increases the demand for broadcasting rights, leading to serious competition for the broadcasting rights of popular sports events. Another arena where commercial and financial benefits emerge is digital platforms and social media networks. Using digital marketing strategies on these highly interactive platforms enables sports betting brands to reach a wider audience and expand their potential customer base (Houghton, 2021; Killick & Griffiths, 2021; Yüce et al., 2023).

Trending Upwards: The Growth of Sports Betting and Its Impact on Advertising

The growth in sports betting is directly related to digitalization and technological advancements. This growth has made sports betting a significant focus of interest in the advertising industry, allowing sports betting advertising to reach audiences through various media tools. In this context, it can be stated that sports have now become a marketing platform offering attractive and unique opportunities for sports betting operators (Hing, 2014). If you have recently passed a billboard, turned on the television, or used mobile games, apps, or the internet, you have likely seen a sports betting advertisement. With each passing day, licensed bookmakers use advertisements as an active channel to attract their target audience, increase brand recognition, and expand their potential customer base (Houghton et al., 2020, 2021; Lopez-Gonzalez et al., 2017).

Sports betting brands spend significant amounts of money on various advertising strategies such as television ads, advertisements embedded in a match's commentary, electronic banners around the playing field, commercial breaks on radio and television, stadium naming rights, social media campaigns, and sponsorship deals (Torrance et al., 2021). Additionally, sponsorships with sports events, teams (prominently on a team's jersey), and athletes have significantly increased, making betting companies more visible and socially accepted (Lopez-Gonzalez et al., 2018a). Some researchers have revealed that the popularity

of mobile applications and online betting platforms has increased people's easy access to sports gambling, changing their behaviors and motivations related to sports betting (Deans et al., 2016; Gökçe Yüce et al., 2022; Torrance et al., 2023; Yüce et al., 2023). Mobile applications and online platforms are emerging as significant advertising mediums in this context.

Sports betting, one of the fastest-growing types of gambling, is particularly noteworthy for its advertisements. Sports enthusiasts are exposed to numerous betting stimuli during sports events (Killick & Griffiths, 2019). In summary, sports betting advertising is considered inseparable from the sport due to its attachment to the fan's emotional consumption of a favorite sport, team, or player (Lopez-Gonzalez et al., 2018a, 2018b).

However, with the increase in sports betting ads, another aspect that needs attention is the potential of these advertisements and promotional campaigns to trigger sports betting behavior and related negative consequences (e.g., addiction risk). Some researchers (Lopez-Gonzalez & Griffiths, 2021; Lopez-Gonzalez et al., 2018a) have found links between sports betting advertisements and risky betting behaviors. This situation, which can be considered the dark side of sports betting advertisements, necessitates the control of the content and the manner of their publication. In this context, while some countries (e.g., Italy, United Kingdom, Turkey, Belgium, Australia, and Chile) have introduced regulations on sports betting advertisements, others have not (e.g., USA). These regulations are fundamentally based on an ethical understanding, and the advertisements are expected not to be misleading and should include specific warnings (e.g., responsibility and the harms of gambling) (Rockloff et al., 2024).

Enhancing the Excitement of Sport: Sports Betting as a Form of Entertainment

Sports and gambling, are two of humanity's oldest activities, with sports gambling popular in societies worldwide for centuries and documented since ancient Roman times

(Schreiber, 2016). The fundamental motivations for sports betting have unique dynamics. They are generally categorized as making money, having fun, increasing socialization and recreation, growing a knowledge of the game, expanding interest in sports, and intensifying a feeling of being in the game (Gökce Yüce et al., 2022). In this context, the entertainment aspect of sports betting emerges as a primary factor. As a result, the possibility of making predictions about a sports event and obtaining financial feedback adds excitement to sports competitions and races, creating a natural attraction element with entertainment content.

The entertainment form of sports betting is shaped by the need for excitement, having a good time, and enjoyment. Individuals who bet perceive betting as a good option for utilizing their free time, reducing stress, escaping the routine of daily life, and obtaining similar positive outcomes (Lee et al., 2014). Some studies (Etuk, 2022; Killick & Griffiths, 2021) indicate that sports betting is a form of entertainment comparable to the most popular activities, such as listening to music, playing sports, and going to the cinema. Accordingly, it can be stated that entertainment is a fundamental motivation that encompasses a wide range of similar elements (Gökce Yüce et al., 2022).

The target audience for sports betting is quite diverse. Hing et al. (2015) classified this group as:

1. Professional. Gamblers who view sports betting as a source of income and organize all of their activities accordingly.
2. Semi-professional. Casual or social gamblers who regularly bet for social interaction and entertainment.
3. Amateur and recreational. Sports enthusiasts who follow certain sports events and teams and bet on activities in these events.

These target groups demonstrate the diversity and dynamism of the sports betting market. Each group bets with different motivations and expectations, which are the fundamental elements determining betting companies' marketing and advertising strategies. *We Carry Our Bookmaker With Us in Our Pocket: How Technological Advancements Have Accelerated the Growth of Sports Betting*

With the advancement of technology, the opportunity to gamble through the internet and mobile platforms has allowed individuals to engage in sports betting independently of time and location. This advancement has influenced both the diversification and growth of the sports betting market and its global market share and brought significant changes in consumer behaviors in the sports betting market (Deutscher et al., 2019; Gordon et al., 2015; Killick & Griffiths, 2021; Seal et al., 2022). At the same time, changes in information technology have significantly increased the economic and financial impact of live betting in the sports betting market (Killick & Griffiths, 2021).

The growing popularity of sports betting has facilitated the transition from venue-based sports betting to the online environment. This shift provides consumers instant access to sports betting platforms where they are not limited by the opening hours of betting companies and can place a wide range of bets at any time (Hing et al., 2022b). Torrance et al. (2023) listed the structural characteristics of online sports betting as instant access, continuous betting opportunities, customizability, and market convergence. Bettors can now bet on sports anytime, anywhere, using mobile devices or computers (Deans et al., 2016; Hing et al., 2022;).

Additionally, technological advancements have contributed to the popularity of e-sport, leading to sectoral growth adjacent to sports betting, such as e-sport betting (Biggar et al., 2023). There is a substantial growth market following new technologies such as virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and artificial intelligence in sports betting. Griffiths

(2017) discussed the applicability of the next generation of VR headsets, not initially designed for media sports consumption, to sports betting, highlighting that betting experiences could transition from passive to active. VR and AR technologies have the increased potential to revolutionize the sports betting industry. The immersive experience offered by VR technologies can enable bettors to transform competitions into activities that are both highly enjoyable to watch and interactive and engaging (Pirker, 2023). Additionally, VR and AR, supported by real-time data analysis and advanced graphics, could offer bettors more diverse decision-making possibilities. Properly integrating these technologies allows the sports betting market to reach a broader audience and significantly enhance the user experience.

Although VR and AR technology signals the future of sports betting and its integration into sports broadcasting, there is already a multitude of marketing, advertising, and promotional techniques to ensure sports betting is a constant part of the conversation during live broadcasts of sports and other sports-related programs.

Communicating the Odds: How Sports Betting Became Part of the Sports Broadcast

An Australian Case Study:

As an extension of the increasingly intense relationship between sports and gambling, betting has become a dominant feature of sports coverage. In Australia, there are five times as many gambling advertisements as there are advertisements for alcohol during the live coverage of sports or ancillary programming about sports (O'Brien & Iqbal, 2019). For gambling companies, live sports offer a platform to reach their primary audience and promote their products. For sports and media organizations, gambling companies offer an essential source of revenues secured through sponsorship or advertising deals worth millions of dollars.

Clearly, the commercial and financial realities of sports and media industries underscore the views of influential sports administrators, governance, and media (Duncan, 2020; Seal et al., 2022). More than ever, sporting organizations rely on the revenues from their media rights deals to survive and hopefully thrive in an increasingly competitive market. Many media organizations are paying record amounts for the exclusive rights to broadcast sporting events. Live top-tier sporting events offer a premium product for them to attract millions of viewers (Duncan, 2020; Seal et al., 2022). With the proliferation of online, digital on-demand media products emerging in the market, attracting mass audiences at once is something live sports, more than almost any other product, can still offer. Thus, for many media organizations, sports are worth their weight in gold.

However, to recoup their expenses, they rely on revenues from advertisers, which burgeoning gambling companies are becoming top payers. Sports organizations also benefit directly from wagering. In Australia, for every dollar gambled on the Australian Football League (AFL), the AFL receives ten cents for what is known as the ‘product fee’ (McClure, 2022). In 2022, the AFL was estimated to generate between \$30 million to \$40 million in product fees. The product fee revenues are combined with revenues generated by the AFL’s direct exclusive sponsorship with Sports Bet and the estimated \$3 million earned from at-ground signage gambling advertising. The Victorian government also receives ten percent of the net wagering revenue (McClure, 2022).

Integration of Sports Gambling Advertising In-Game Day Coverage and Sports Programs:

Sports gambling has become legally entrenched in sports globally, as it is a provider of substantial revenue streams for professional sporting bodies, media companies, and governments to the point where it is in all of their best interests for the nexus to continue (McGee, 2020; Seal et al., 2022). Given the beneficiaries of this nexus, it is perhaps unsurprising that sports betting has become a prevalent part of sports coverage. Indeed, it has

cleverly become part of the sports experience, with live coverage of sports and ancillary sport-related programs littered with advertisements and in-program promotions (Deans et al., 2017; McGee, 2020; Seal et al., 2022). These paid forms of content are executed in different forms and generally oriented towards different outcomes.

The most apparent type of paid content is advertisements, which are generally targeted toward promoting the sports betting company or new products the company may have created or would like to link to a particular sport (Deans et al., 2017; Seal et al., 2022; Thomas, 2014). In 2022 it was estimated the AFL received up to \$11 million from in sponsorship and advertising revenue from their sports betting partners, while the league's official broadcasters received up to \$50 million in advertising revenue from betting companies (McClure, 2022).

However, other forms of gambling promotion emerged, which were more seamlessly integrated into sports coverage or programming around the sport. These included displaying the odds via graphics during matches, segments within the coverage dedicated to discussing the odds of the match or examples of the exotic bets within matches, bookmakers sponsoring various segments within broadcasts, and even bookmakers joining the team of commentators and analysts to provide regular updates of the odds and reminders of betting options.

In 2016, media analysis and comment television program *Media Watch* highlighted the number of gambling advertisements integrated into the coverage of the host broadcaster, Channel 7:

“The AFL grand final day broadcast had 21 betting commercials in all, at an estimated \$130,000 a 30-second spot, which adds up to more than two million dollars for Channel Seven. And half of those were for CrownBet, which forks out \$10 million a year to sponsor the AFL and which also got to spruik (promote) the odds” (para 5).

During the coverage, Channel 7 promoted CrownBet as their “proud telecast sponsor.” The coverage also included a range of additional segments and advertisements where CrownBet employees and celebrity ambassadors, including former Australian cricket captain Ricky Ponting, promoted the odds and CrownBet betting options throughout the coverage on Channel Seven’s AFL Grand Final coverage, on October 1st, 2016.

Matthew Campbell (CrownBet Employee):

“The Western Bulldogs are the best-backed team to win this year's Grand Final. And the market seems to have settled on the Swans at \$1.55, the Dogs at \$2.50...”

Ricky Ponting (CrownBet Celebrity Ambassador):

“You don't need to be lucky to drive this! Or have these seats...CrownBet. Reward yourself.”

Channel 7 also created a promotional game before the commencement of the Grand Final, sponsored by their sports betting partner to promote *CrownBet*.

Campbell Brown (Channel 7 Commentator):

“We're standing ten meters high in the Crownbet 'tower of torp.' The aim of the game is to kick the ball from here, 25 meters into that premiership cup” (Media Watch, para 6-10)

This type of overt promotion of sports gambling is not unique to Channel 7 or coverage of the AFL. In 2013, host broadcaster of the National Rugby League (NRL), Channel 9, included corporate bookmaker Tom Waterhouse as part of the match day commentary team. His role was not to commentate on the action or to analyze the game, but to provide regular updates on the odds of the match, various betting options, and other betting products. Media Watch (2013) highlighted his role and integration into the match day coverage (from Channel Nine, Friday Night Football, March 22nd, 2013) which enhanced the idea of gambling being an integral part of the sport.

Before the game:

Cam Williams (Channel 9 Commentator): “Here's Tom Waterhouse with the latest betting odds.”

Tom Waterhouse (Bookmaker, TomWaterhouse.com): “Well, the Tigers are \$1.70 favourites, there's a few good reasons for it...”

And at half time:

Tom Waterhouse: “Every time the Tigers led by more than six points at half time last year, they went onto win the game...”

And at the end of the game:

Tom Waterhouse: “Well, the big money's come for the Raiders, they're in to \$1.69 favourites...” (Media Watch, para 21-23).

Although Channel 9 was set to introduce a new code outlining “restrictions on the promotion of live odds, including [...] a ban on live odds promotions by commentators (including guests) directly before, during and after a sporting event” (Media Watch, 2013, para 17), the code did not apply to Waterhouse given he was not a considered a commentator under the code because, “He is there as a spokesperson for his company in an advertising sense. We have now got a discrete segment [...] it is branded with Tom Waterhouse graphics and a Tom Waterhouse microphone” (Media Watch, 2013, para 31).

Nevertheless, community and viewer angst directed towards Channel 9 over the overt promotion of sports betting through Waterhouse during their NRL coverage led to Waterhouse being removed from Channel 9’s NRL coverage on March 28th (Aston & Ralston, 2013).

Further community angst and concerns about the explicit exposure of sports betting, particularly to children, led to significant government reforms in May 2017 in Australia to restrict the number of gambling advertisements during live sports in “acknowledgement of

community concerns that regular exposure to gambling advertisements during live sport could normalise gambling in the eyes of children” (Parliament of Australia, 2023, 106).

The rules for gambling advertising during live sports vary depending on when it is broadcast. Between 5:00 am and 8:30 pm:

- Gambling advertising is prohibited from five minutes before the scheduled start of play until five minutes after the conclusion of live coverage of play.
- The promotion of betting odds is prohibited from five minutes before play until five minutes after play (referred to as the ‘five-minute rule’).
- The promotion of betting odds by commentators is prohibited from 30 minutes before play until 30 minutes after play.

Between 8:30 pm and 5:00 am:

- Gambling advertising and the promotion of odds are not permitted during play.
- Gambling advertising is permitted before and after play and during scheduled and unscheduled breaks.
- The promotion of betting odds is permitted only before and after play, not during scheduled breaks.

All gambling advertisements and promotion of betting odds must be accompanied by a responsible gambling message. The Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice (the Free TV Code) also outlined that: a commercial relating to betting or gambling must not be broadcast in any program classified G or lower between 6:00 am and 8:30 am and between 4:00 pm and 7:00 pm. However, loopholes exist:

- Gambling advertising can be broadcast between 8:30 am and 4:00 pm during any program not principally directed to children. Further, this clause also allows gambling advertising between 8:30 pm and 5:00 am.

- Clause 6.5.2 states that the restrictions in clause 6.5.1 do not apply during news, current affairs, or sports programs (not sports events).

While these restrictions have impacted the level of live betting advertisements and promotion during the live coverage of sports in certain time slots, it appears that rather than reducing overall sports gambling advertisement and paid content, it has merely transferred it to different times, mediums, and forms. Since the 2017 reforms were introduced in 2018, a significant amount of gambling advertising has moved to social media platforms, which are largely self-regulated and, thus, somewhat inconsistent in how they enforce relevant gambling advertising codes (Parliament of Australia, 2013). The Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) reported that “Twitter is the only platform which appears to prohibit rather than restrict gambling-related advertising. Facebook, Google, and Snapchat impose some safeguards by requiring advertisers to gain pre-approval for gambling-related ads” (Parliament of Australia, 2023, 113).

The 2017 restrictions did not reduce in-stadia advertising, such as signage on the grounds or logos on players’ jerseys, which are viewed on television. Furthermore, after the alterations to the regulations in 2017, there was a 40% increase in the overall volume of gambling advertisements during prime-time slots on metropolitan television (Parliament of Australia, 2023). Between the 2017 and 2018 AFL seasons, the implementation of the 8:30 pm watershed resulted in a 131% rise in gambling ads aired during breaks in play and pre-and post-game coverage. Similarly, during the 2018 NRL season, there was a 25% increase in gambling ads broadcast after 8:30 pm (Parliament of Australia, 2023). Moreover, gambling promotions during non-sports content on television and radio witnessed a 50% increase, primarily occurring between 6:00 pm and 10:30 pm (Parliament of Australia, 2023). On radio, following the rule adjustments, gambling advertisements notably escalated during peak

hours, with a substantial 94% increase during the Monday to Friday 'breakfast' shift (5:30–9:00 am) and 'drive' shift (4:00–7:00 pm) (Parliament of Australia, 2023).

Impacting the Target Audience:

In Australia, the target audience of most gambling advertisements is males aged between 18 and 35 (McGee, 2020; Raymen & Smith, 2017). Reports in 2017 highlighted that 90% of online gamblers were male, with an average age of 31 (Duncan, 2017).

Indeed, online sports betting seamlessly aligns with the other characteristics of younger sports fans who enjoy multi-tasking (Deans et al., 2017; Duncan, 2020; McGee, 2020), such as

- watching sports while gambling on outcomes of and within games;
- the convenience of an app on their phone;
- the instant gratification and ongoing excitement of exotic bets on outcomes during games;
- the entertainment—a crucial feature of the prevailing narratives of gambling advertisements;
- an intellectual stake in the contest, such as betting on outcomes of and within matches, or as the saying goes, putting your money where your mouth is.

Research conducted by the Australian Gambling Research Centre in 2019, which focused on young men aged 18–35 who reported having bet on sports, found that the primary motivator of placing a bet was that they “enjoyed a punt” and up to 40% of betting activity was based on impulse, either before the sporting event (30%) or during the event (10%) (Jenkinson et al., 2019). Another critical motivator of gambling was that respondents felt it made watching sports more exciting and offered a social experience and an ‘adrenaline rush.’ 64% claimed to gamble when under the influence of alcohol (Jenkinson, 2019).

As such, many gambling advertisements are targeted to young male sports fans and carry dominant messages depicting gambling as offering an enjoyable social experience, bonding, and creating lasting memories with friends, often while consuming alcohol, entertainment, instant gratification, excitement, and the opportunity to test and prove your intellectual superiority.

Shaping the Narrative:

Research has found that sports gambling advertisements utilize various tactics like appeals to camaraderie, gender stereotypes, sporting traditions, sexualized visuals, expressions of power and control, and patriotic themes (Deans et al., 2016; Rockloff, 2020). Typically characterized by a brisk pace and positive vibes, these advertisements center around themes such as victory, adventure, and joy (Deans et al., 2016; Rockloff, 2020).

For example, in January 2021, international online sports betting company PointsBet announced it had appointed retired basketball star Shaquille O'Neal as its Australian brand ambassador. Later that year, O'Neal featured in a range of advertisements with Inspired Unemployed, a comedy group aged in their twenties with a significant social media reach of 1.5 million followers on both TikTok and Instagram (Nichols, 2022). The advertisements promoted the ease, speed, and convenience of using PointsBet while depicting sports gambling as part of Australian culture, friendship, and the sports viewing experience. The advertisements exaggerated Australian sporting vernacular, slang, and popular culture, leading O'Neal to conclude that just like the PointsBet app, "Aussies" are "built differently" regarding friendship, their love of sport, and their passion for gambling.

Thus, the key messages from the advertisements were straightforward: Australia is different from anywhere else; it is customary in Australia to gamble on sports, a key component of friendship and the Australian way of life. As such, the PointsBet app has been tailor-made for Australian gamblers—it is faster, easier, and better.

Points Bet Advertisements:

1. “Shaqodile Dundee”

Audio	Overlay
<p>Shaq: How about this filly in the fifth, fellas? Put a 50 on it?</p>	<p>Set in a typical Australian front yard. Three friends sitting on Esky’s, wearing Akubra hats and singlets, eating chips (crisps), with a barbeque in the background. A friend sitting in the middle holds a mobile phone.</p> <p>Shaq sits on an Esky opposite the three friends.</p> <p>Three friends are chatting and squatting away flies.</p>
	<p>The three friends respond to Shaq using exaggerated, incomprehensible slang to illustrate that Australian friends have a unique lingo that only they can understand.</p>
<p>Shaq: Is that a yes or no?</p>	<p>The three friends continue with their unique dialogue and sounds, all which have meaning amongst the friendship group, while Shaq shakes his head with a confused expression on his face.</p>

<p>Shaq: You Aussies sure are built different, just like the PointsBet app. It's faster, easier. These horse racing offers are ridiculous.</p>	<p>Shaq looks at the camera and holds up his phone, showing the PointsBet app.</p> <p>Words appear on the screen: <i>Faster. Easier. Better.</i></p> <p>Shaq turns back to speak to the three friends.</p>
<p>You know what they call me, mate? Shaqodile Dundee.</p>	<p>They look at Shaq, unimpressed with this joke.</p> <p>Graphic appears at the bottom of the screen, stating: <i>PointsBet. Built Different.</i></p>

2. AFL (Australian Football League)

Audio	Overlay
<p>Shaq: So, they dribble it?</p> <p>Footy fan 1: Yeah, they bounce it.</p> <p>Shaq: And a long-range goal is a three pointer?</p> <p>Footy Fan 2: Up the guts is six.</p>	<p>Shaq is sitting with three friends who are intensely watching a game of footy on the television in front of them. The three friends are dressed in their team's AFL scarves and beanies.</p> <p>Shaq, clearly unaware of the game's rules, is asking the three friends about the rules,</p>

<p>Shaq: What if it goes to the side?</p> <p>Footy Fan 3: Just the one.</p>	<p>which they find annoying as they are more interested in watching the game.</p>
<p>Shaq: So, you score if you miss it:</p> <p>Footy Fans: Baaaallll!</p>	<p>The friends shout at the TV screen.</p>
<p>Shaq: Your Aussie sports sure are built different, just like the PointsBet app. It's faster, easier, unique markets, better offers. I'm in.</p>	<p>Shaq looks at the camera and holds up his phone showing the PointsBet app.</p> <p>Words appear on the screen: <i>Faster. Easier. Better.</i></p>
<p>Footy Fan 1: Yep, you got it big fella.</p>	<p>Shaq turns back to speak to the three friends.</p>
<p>Shaq: Oi, quarterback, get a dog up. Yeah.</p>	<p>Shaq shouts at the TV screen.</p>
<p>Footy Fan 2: Can't bring this guy anywhere.</p>	<p>The three friends cringe at Shaq's attempt to 'fit in' and are embarrassed by his comments.</p> <p>Graphic appears at the bottom of the screen, stating: <i>PointsBet. Built Different.</i></p>

3. Cut Snakes

Audio	Overlay
	<p>Shaq walks into a typical Australian pub.</p> <p>Australian flags are above the door, and sports fans are scattered throughout the pub.</p> <p>Shaq looks at a group of three friends dressed in tradesman uniforms. The mates are talking about a bet on a horse race.</p>
<p>One thing I love about you Aussies, you're all different. And on the punt, you're all as mad as cut snakes.</p>	<p>Shaq looks at and speaks to the camera.</p>
	<p>Shaq walks through the pub, first past three football fans dressed in their team's colors, then past three friends dressed in suits discussing a 'sure thing.'</p> <p>Shaq looks at the camera and shakes his head.</p>

<p>Shaq: Now I'm getting why you're all on the PointsBet app. It's built different, faster, easier, better offers.</p>	<p>He then stops in front of three friends trying to watch sports on television and looks into the camera to speak.</p> <p>Words appear on the screen: <i>Faster. Easier. Better.</i></p>
<p>Sports Fans: Oi, number 32, get moving, or we'll flatten you.</p>	<p>The friends shout at Shaq.</p>
<p>Shaq: Man, I love this country.</p>	<p>Shaq looks at the camera.</p> <p>Graphic appears at the bottom of the screen, stating: <i>PointsBet. Built Different.</i></p>

The range of clever, targeted sports gambling messages that have been, for the most part, seamlessly integrated into the sports broadcast package means that gambling messages are an ever-present part of the sporting discussion and, more so, the coverage of sports. This has significant consequences for the viewer and has changed how fans engage and interact with sport through the viewing experience.

Watching Sport in the Age of Gambification: The Impact on the Audience Experience

The presence of sports betting alters the sports audience experience in many ways. The impact on the consumer experience of watching sports is felt in the rapidly evolving betting landscape of the U.S. and the established sports betting regions worldwide (e.g., Europe and Australia). In U.S. sports broadcasting, what was once a whisper or subtle nod to

betting lines or in-game wagering implications has become visible, openly discussed, and incorporated into the broadcast. Several examples include the pre-game talk shows' inclusion of gambling information, the continuous scroll of betting information at the bottom of the screen, and announcers having the freedom to discuss in-game wagering implications.

Beyond simple advertising revenue, sports media juggernaut ESPN signed a \$1.5 billion/10-year deal with Penn Entertainment, where it will restructure Penn's sportsbook to the newly branded platform, ESPN BET (ESPN, 2023). This is not the only U.S. media company in this space, with NBC Sports partnering with PointsBet and Fox Sports initially partnering with The Stars Group and Flutter before pulling back from the space (Morais, 2023; Weprin, 2023). These partnerships undoubtedly blur the lines between sports journalism, entertainment, broadcasting, gambling, and sports betting. Another example, Australia, witnessed News Corp create a sports betting coverage website. However, it was criticized immediately over concerns about normalizing gambling and the problems associated with it (Belot, 2023a). Whether it is production, commentary, or sports information alterations, sports betting has changed how audiences consume sports. Zahran (2023) pointed out in an article about this changing landscape that criticism underlies a reality in our modern sports coverage and sports journalism. He stated, "gambling is very much a cog in the machine whether we like it or not" (para. 2).

Another way the audience experiences changes is when ancillary activities like fantasy sport or sports betting increase information. When fans are vested in a game's result they are more likely to view or follow it (Bridge, 2022). Even with season-long fantasy sport, prior to the daily fantasy sport surge around 2015, research indicated that fantasy sport users consumed two to three times the amount of sports media coverage compared to those not participating in fantasy sport (Billings & Ruihley, 2014). Part of this reasoning is based on information-seeking behaviors, game enhancement, and intrigue in the financial and

managerial implications associated with fantasy sports participation. For sports betting, similar reasoning holds with a desire to add value to watching a contest or follow along with bets made.

In research conducted by CRG Global/VIP+ with over 1,300 respondents (Bridge, 2022), results indicated that sport gamblers consumed more sports than usual when betting on a game. National Football League (NFL) consumers reported the highest percentage of increased consumption, with 67% of respondents indicating they watched more when betting. The NFL is followed by the NBA (57%), MLB (46%), NCAA football (44%), MMA (42%), and NCAA basketball (41%) of consumers indicating an increase in consumption. Other research results indicate that most consumers will continue watching “blow-out” games due to betting and will adopt new teams due to emotional investments made during their betting investments (Bridge, 2022).

The English Premier League (EPL) has taken notice of the importance of sports gambling surrounding its media coverage. The reasons why the EPL is a big draw for sports bettors are its competitive nature and high-stakes drama, media coverage and exposure, star power, iconic teams, and data and statistics availability (Complete Sports, 2023). These elements can likely be applied to games worldwide as many compete for the attention of sports gamblers. Whether it is fantasy sports or sports betting, ancillary activities are clearing a path, creating interest, and giving people another reason to watch more sports. For sports broadcast rights holders and partners, “this is manna from heaven,” with more attention and focus given to the games (Bridge, 2022, para. 2).

Another critical aspect of how the sports audience experience has been altered due to betting activity involves the access to and technology surrounding the activity. Whether it is a mobile device, tablet, computer, or extra television screen, sports bettors are utilizing multiple tools to track their bets and future action and follow live results (Funt, 2023). In a

discussion of sports betting and fandom, Bradley (2022) contended that younger gamblers will “connect more fully to sports gambling through technology and social media, until betting on games is almost their exclusive entry to sports” (para. 95). Social media, apps, betting, and consumption of contests are about audience engagement with sport and with people. Citing Mark Beal, an assistant professor, Bradley (2002) wrote, “Even if they’re betting one, two or three dollars, [people are] involved in watching the entire game. This is engagement in sports in 2022 and beyond. Sports betting is allowing that to happen” (para. 27).

While there are many positive aspects surrounding the audience experience related to sports betting, there are also concerns. The normalization, desensitization, and over-publicization of sports betting are causing worry within the problem gambling field. Problem gambling is defined as “gambling behavior that is damaging to a person or their family, often disrupting their daily life and career” (National Council on Problem Gambling, 2023, para. 2). In established sports betting regions like Australia and Europe, or burgeoning regions (the U.S.), ever-present media messages create issues for those dealing with problem gambling. With many of the warning signs of having a gambling disorder revolving around the constant thought of gambling, the feeling of needing to win more money, and restlessness when trying to reduce or stop gambling (para. 3), one can see how an increase in media exposure and change to the sports media environment could exacerbate a gambling problem.

The environment certainly has changed. In the U.S., sportsbooks spent nearly \$21.4 million in national TV advertising in 2019. In 2022, that amount increased to \$314.6 million (Purdum, 2023). In Australia between 2022 and 2023, “more than a million gambling ads aired on free-to-air television and radio,” with an estimated \$238 million spent on recruitment advertising (Belot, 2023b, para. 1). In the U.K. and Australia, *The Guardian* announced a global ban on gambling advertising, arguing it is unethical to take money from services that

can lead to “addiction and financial ruin” (Waterson 2023, para. 1). In addition, Sky, a leading broadcaster of sport and soccer in the U.K., decided to “limit gambling advertising to one spot per commercial break” in response to customer worry about the number of ads on television (Wood, 2022, para. 1).

These examples illustrate the enormous spending power of sportsbooks across the globe. Constant advertising highlighting risk-free bets, ease of access, potential prizes, endless fun, and the social nature of sports betting fails to mention the real risk that this normalization presents to vulnerable groups (e.g., minors, college students, young professionals, veterans, or others dealing with addiction or financial distress). This issue has even caught the attention of the EPL. Citing players' influence on young people as role models, EPL clubs agreed to prohibit sponsorship from gambling companies on the front of their uniforms. With many clubs currently in uniform sponsorship deals with gambling companies, the agreement will not be enforced until the end of the 2025–26 season (Associated Press, 2023).

The Future: Enhanced Integration or Government Intervention?

While different worldwide jurisdictions are at different stages of integrating gambling into sports products, it appears that, in most cases, the integration is accelerating, and the sports-media-gambling nexus is more substantial than ever before. Those advocating for increased deregulation and, subsequently, greater integration argue that sports gambling provides vital sources of revenue that benefit athletes, fans, and sporting bodies. Sports gambling, they argue, attracts more fans and viewers to matches and events, which stimulates additional revenues in the form of advertising revenues, sponsorship, and media rights deals. For sports gambling advocates, restrictions on sports gambling corrupt the sports product, compromising overall support for the sport or event, which will reduce the need and

willingness for gambling-oriented advertising and sponsorship and ultimately weaken the value of the sport when negotiating media rights deals.

Furthermore, advocates often argue that the local teams and communities are the biggest winners of the increased strengthening of gambling integration in sports. In an increasingly competitive sports market, where the costs required to survive and thrive are higher than ever, gambling revenues are essential to help fund and foster participation in local sports, and help nurture pathways to elite programs. Advocates also argue that gambling-related revenue is essential for ensuring live sports is available on free-to-air networks, arguing that broadcasters capacity to show live sports on free-to-air television would be compromised if they lost gambling advertising revenue, stating “...we’re going to end up with rich people who can afford to watch important sporting events and poor people who can’t” (cited in Parliament of Australia, 2023, 119).

Likewise, direct sponsorships between sports clubs and gambling companies also create a complex perception of the importance of corporate bookmakers in the sustainability and well-being of the clubs’ fans support. Since sponsors are promoted as “partners” of the club and are essential in ensuring both on-field and off-field success, fans who feel uncomfortable about the normalization of sports gambling can also view sports gambling “partners” through a positive lens.

Nevertheless, in communities where sports gambling has been deregulated and firmly integrated into the product, evidence shows there is growing angst in the sports gambling nexus and its increasing normalization into sports. In Australia, for example, a 2015 report highlighted that over half a million Australian adults (574,000) were estimated to have regularly gambled on sports (Armstrong & Carroll, 2017). Eighty-eight percent were male, 75% were aged between 18 and 49, and their typical monthly expenditure on sports betting amounted to approximately \$1,000 over the past year. Forty-one percent of all regular sports

bettors (234,000 adults) experienced one or more gambling problems in 2015. In a typical month, 46 cents in every dollar spent on sports betting by regular sports bettors came from a person with moderate to severe gambling problems (Armstrong & Carroll, 2017). In 2019-2020, Australians gambled \$11.1 billion on sports and lost \$961 million, with the average person over 18 losing \$1,277 per year on gambling (Queensland Treasury, 2022).

Within this context, an inquiry into online gambling and its impacts on problem gamblers found that many Australians were “intensely frustrated and annoyed by current levels of gambling advertising and were concerned about the harm caused by exposure to gambling advertising, especially to young people (Parliament of Australia, 2023, 97).” The inquiry found that “69% of Australians believe there are too many betting advertisements,” with 70% of respondents agreeing “that gambling advertisements on television should be banned” (Parliament of Australia, 2023, 97). Parents highlighted their concerns about the level and intensity of exposure to sports gambling to their children, which promoted, often through celebrity endorsements, sports gambling as a “normal, sociable, and risk-free activity that is intrinsic to enjoying sport” (Parliament of Australia, 2023, 99).

The impact of clever marketing depicting sports gambling as usual, fun, exciting, and a part of “mateship” culture was revealed in studies conducted in Australia and the U.K. that found 75% of young people considered gambling a typical or expected part of sports (Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, 2023). This is not surprising given that these sports fans grew up being reminded of the odds and the many platforms they can bet on almost every sport-related program and platform they consume. As Arunogiri (2022) stated, “There's not been a generation that's had this before” (cited in Parliament of Australia, 2023, 103).

Other studies support these findings. A 2022 study of Victorian sports fans by La Trobe University, including nearly 50,000 respondents, found that 78% felt they should be

able to watch sports on television free from gambling advertisements; 87% agreed that young people (12–17 years) were exposed to too much gambling advertising; and 63% said betting should not be a part of sports (Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, 2023).

So, how will the government respond? Given the increased normalization of sports gambling, resulting in community angst and significant losses for many sports gamblers, will governments around the world further tighten restrictions on sports betting and gambling advertising? The most likely changes would be to reduce or completely ban sports gambling advertisements during live sports or across all platforms and media types. However, given the apparent reliance that sports organizations and broadcasters have on sports gambling company revenues, how realistic is such change? How will governments globally view and address the compromise between community concerns and the commercial realities of professional sports? How will they weigh the commercial benefits of the sports-gambling-media nexus with the obvious issues it creates? Moreover, how will countries who are increasingly relaxing restrictions around sports gambling (e.g., the U.S.) likely to use countries, such as Australia, as a case study to guide decisions about the sport-gambling relationship?

Many advocates for an unfettered sports gambling market argue that it is up to bettors to ensure they are not gambling too much or allowing sports gambling to have a detrimental impact on their lives. However, the very nature of sports betting products, enhanced by savvy and targeted marketing techniques include integrated sports gambling messages within sports broadcasts and programming. These methods add to the appeal of sports gambling, which is, by nature, addictive. Thus, the most pressing dilemma for many jurisdictions across the sporting globe is ensuring sports gambling enhances the sports product rather than becoming sport's ruin.

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