Sports Betting: 
A Gamble in Itself?

by

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1. Abstract

There is no consensus on what defines a problem gambler. It can be looked at through the lens of financial impact, effect on mental health, negative impact in the workplace, or a host of many other things. It is important to understand how problem gamblers themselves define their “problem”, for only then can they seek the exact type of help they need, and appropriate structural changes can be made. Right now, there are attempts to solve problem gambling without specifically defining what a problem is. Thus, the research question for this paper is: How do active sports bettors define a sports gambling "problem"?

2. Introduction

Sports betting has existed legally for a long time in many countries, and illegally in several countries as well. Countries like the United Kingdom have had it legally for a long time (Countries With Legal Sports Betting, 2022) while countries like the UAE have still outlawed it (Why Is Sports Betting Still Illegal In Some Countries?, 2022). Till recently, sports betting was not legal in most states of the US (Smiley, 2017). Now that more and more states are passing regulation legalizing sports betting, it’s necessary to recognize that while a move like this is important for industry, it can also have detrimental impact on society if it’s not handled carefully.

Sports betting in the UK has been legal for a long time. Since the 1920s, greyhound racing, football pools, and horseracing have been legal there. In the 1960s, betting shops were made legal once again after a ban in 1845 (Grosvenor Casino, 2020) It is a prevalent part of their culture with as many as 10 of the 20 Premier League (England’s soccer league) teams in 2020
had betting companies as their main shirt sponsors (Score and Change, 2019). While it has been an integral part of UK culture and has the potential to become an integral part of the American sports experience, it’s also important to note its potential pitfalls and how they can be addresses in the early stages of American sports betting.

According to the “Select Committee on the Social and Economic Impact of the Gambling Industry” report commission by the House of Lords in 2020, 25% of online gambling profits came from problem gamblers (Gambling, 2020). It also reported that one problem gambler took their own life every day. There is nothing wrong with bringing new industry to the US, where sports are an integral part of everyday life already but trying to protect those who may suffer because of it should also be a key priority. This paper hopes to analyze how problem gamblers and sports bettors can be protected by understanding what their problem really is.

3. Problem Gambling and Sports

Many definitions exist for problem gambling. A study conducted by Dwyer, Shapiro, and Drayer (Dwyer, Shapiro, & Drayer, 2017) use Richard Rosenthal’s definition (Rosenthal, 1992) of problem gambling to flesh out that that problem gambling “progressive disorder characterized by irrational thinking, loss of control, preoccupation with gambling, and/or the continuation of behavior despite negative consequences”. Their work also points out additional research (Matthews, Farsnworth, & Griffiths, 2009) that finds that approximately one in 5 online gamblers is a PG or exhibits a propensity to problem gambling.

The process to try and narrow down from problem gambling to problem sports betting needs an extra step in the middle since (legal) sports betting is a new phenomenon in the US and data for it is not as widely available. An acceptable middle step would be to analyze the relationships
between problem gambling and fantasy sports. Fantasy sports have long been a haven for would-be sports bettors in countries where sports betting is not permitted but participating in fantasy sports is. Daily fantasy sports (DFS) is different from traditional fantasy sports (TFS). DFS is participating in fantasy sports on a daily basis while TFS is participating in season long fantasy sports. Studies (Dwyer, Shapiro, & Drayer, 2017) found that DFS participation leant itself to problem gambling in the way it can be seen in other gambling activities like sports betting. Other studies (Weiner & Dwyer, 2017) found that a financial motive was much stronger in DFS participants than TFS participants, while social interaction was an important factor for both sets of participants.

Dwyer et al. (2017) found a clear link between problem gambling behaviors and DFS participation. They found that 38% of their sample were at a moderate to high risk for problem gambling behaviors directly related to daily fantasy sports participation, with 13.7% categorized as high risk. DFS participation grew 967% from 2013-2017 and had more than 10 million participants, despite only being active for around 7 years in the United States (Klinski, 2017). If sports betting, a more granular version of DFS participation, sees any of the same growth and problem gambling tendencies as DFS, it will be vital to understand its pitfalls and how to deal with them.

DFS, TFS, and sports betting are not the same, yet given how similar all three are and how they can create problem gamblers for distinct reasons, it is important to note how each of them can affect problem gambling and betting addictions.

Globally, sports betting has mixed legal status. In some countries, it would be impossible to think of it as anything other than legal (Countries With Legal Sports Betting, 2022), whereas in many others it’s illegality cannot be questioned (Why Is Sports Betting Still Illegal In Some Countries?, 2022). Many countries also have legalized certain aspects of gambling due to history and culture, like betting on horse races in India (RA, 2021), while still maintaining strict controls on betting and gambling overall.

Similarly, the United States had not legalized betting for most of the country till very recently. In the last few years, many state legislatures have passed laws making betting legal (Rodenberg, 2021). Nevada has had legal sports betting since the 1940s as a means of invigorating the local economy and making it a paradise for all sorts of gambling- both casino and otherwise. The rest of the US mostly had local bookmakers controlled by the organized crime syndicates of the time (Smiley, 2017).

Over the decades, Congress introduced several laws clamping down on the sports betting industry, keeping up with whatever the contemporary process for betting at the time was. In the 1960s, wire payments for bets were clamped down on whereas at the turn of the century, they sought to keep online betting in control. The Commission on the Review of the National Policy Toward Gambling in 1971 stated in their report that they thought gambling was “inevitable” and most Americans didn’t have a problem with it (Smiley, 2017). Still, the government’s belief that it was a gateway to crime led to their regulatory clampdowns. In 1992, Congress passed PASPA, the Professional and Amateur Sports Provision Act, which “made it unlawful for a state to sponsor, operate, advertise, promote, license or authorize sports betting” (Bird & Bird LLP, 2018). In 2006, Congress introduced the Unlawful Internet Gambling Enforcement Act (UIGEA)
(Nower, Caler, Pickering, & Blaszczynski, 2018), which essentially clamped down on the cashflows related to sports betting. However, it had an exemption for fantasy sports, if it met three criteria, which were as follows (Griffin, 2015):

i. the value of prizes is not dependent on the number of players

ii. the outcome is determined by fantasy-player skill and knowledge, and is based on statistical results of real-world athletes

iii. the outcome cannot be determined by the score of the game or based solely on one individual player’s performance

This allowed some leeway for daily fantasy sports to exist despite increasing legislation attempting to shut down sports betting.

Over the last few years, New Jersey lobbied heavily for sports betting and lead the charge for modern sport betting re-regulation across the US. Following the Supreme Court’s repeal of PASPA, each state was free to make its own rules when it came to sports betting. New Jersey lead the charge to repeal the law (Smiley, 2017). Nevada’s domination in the industry was considered monopolistic, and New Jersey (Bird & Bird LLP, 2018). As of December 2021, the state wise regulations on sports betting look as follows
As one can see, most states have launched a sports betting market, Nebraska and Maryland have the legislation in place to begin, and other states have no legislation yet (Rodenberg, 2021).

This leads to the question: are governments responsible for problem gambling or sport betting addictions?

Oversimplifying it, one can contend that by legalizing it, governments are directly responsible. Conversely, that would make every bad thing that isn’t illegal the government’s fault. As the gambling commission pointed out in 1971, gambling is “inevitable” (Smiley, 2017). Thus, the government’s role should not be to ban sports betting and gambling, but rather trying to aid those who suffer from it. Governments need to make sure that processes are in place to try and prevent sports betting and gambling addictions in addition to, rather than only trying to, “cure” those who suffer from it.

Controlling micro-betting and proposition bets are a first step in bridging that gap. Micro-betting and proposition bets are those bets that can be made on instant outcomes during a live
match. As noted before, a majority of those who participate in proposition bets are more likely to be problem gamblers. Much like when tobacco companies in the 1990s attempted to make cigarettes more addictive than they already were using chemical enhancements (Brenner, 1996), sports betting is made more addictive than it already is by the incorporation of proposition bets. The National Football Post (How Prop Payouts Work) estimates that proposition bets made up nearly 15% to 20% of total NFL bets in for online sportsbooks and are more profitable for them than side bets or total bets. The NFL is unanimously agreed to be the most bet on sport in the US, and its proposition bets are more profitable than any others (How Prop Payouts Work).

Studies related to fantasy sports participation and its legality (or illegality) in some states have raised the point that despite it being a skill-based game, it rarely leads to financial gain. Dwyer et al. (2017) say that “a clear statement about the odds of success or even the average return on investment could be useful for policy makers looking to protect consumers from financial loss”. Perhaps sports betting could employ a similar approach in determining not whether betting should be legal or not, but rather how much someone can bet depending on how much they have lost.

5. Factors Relating to Sports Betting and Problem Gambling

In a 2008 paper, Pearce, Mason, Hiscock, and Day (2008) found that neighborhood access to opportunities for gambling is related to gambling and problem gambling behavior. This is important for the US because it shows that it isn’t just the legality of sports betting in state that matters, but also the pervasiveness of physical gambling locations in those states. This is a definite factor in problem gambling, but there were some notable exceptions to this. WalletHub’s scored rankings of gambling addicted states (McCann, 2022) based on the availability of
gambling and the extent of gambling addiction treatments showed a clear correlation between availability of gambling and gambling addiction, which is consistent with Pearce et al. (2008) and their assessment that access to opportunities relates to problem gambling behavior. However, there were some notable exceptions. Some of the states which ranked high for availability weren't as high on the PG list but states that didn't have as much availability were high on the PG list. Some of the high PG-low availability states were Mississippi and Louisiana whereas the low PG-high availability states were like Minnesota.

New Zealand’s Ministry of Health lists client intervention data on their website (Intervention Client Data, 2021). They define the category as the number of clients who have received gambling harm treatment services and who have identified to the service provider a primary problem gambling mode causing them harm. This dataset shows that Asians and Māori made up a significantly higher subset of this data than their percentage as a population. Similarly, ethnicity may have some correlation to gambling addiction in the US as well and could be a part in explaining why states like Mississippi and Louisiana may have more severe gambling addictions than Minnesota, which has a higher availability of gambling. Mississippi and Louisiana are both more ethnically diverse and also have a lower annual median income per capita than Minnesota. Factors like this might be more important than availability of physical gambling and betting sites since the advent and expansion of the internet and smartphone market.
6. Effects of Problem Gambling

Often when thinking about a gambling problem, one would think of it in financial terms. It’s an addiction which plays itself out numerically more than others, but that’s only scratching the surface of problem gambling. Problem gambling has many effects, but problem gamblers also show similar symptoms of being a problem gambler. Dwyer et al. (2017) assert that one of the key factors leading to one’s decision to participate in DFS relies on their impulsive disposition. Myrseth, Pallesen, Molde, Johnsen, & Lorvik (2009) stated that “impulsivity may not be specific for gambling addiction but rather associated with addictions in general”. This impulsivity plays out financially in many problem gamblers lives, but studies (Bjerg, 2010) found that even in skill-based games, even profitable problem gamblers suffer in their mental, emotional, and social life. This is the side we generally see play out more in other addictions but is the side that is not spoken about much when discussing problem gambling and sports betting addictions.
7. Problem Sports Bettors

Understanding the strife caused by an addiction to gambling or sports betting is rooted in understanding why people bet on sports in general. Spinda and Haridakis (2008) state that six primary reasons exist that lead to fantasy sport participation. They are as follows: ownership, achievement/self-esteem, escape/pass time, socialization, bragging rights, and amusement. When thinking about each those words or phrases in the context of the daily human life, it can be noted as to why they lead to participating in betting and why those same things can fuel the negative effects associated with gambling and betting addictions. Ownership and self-esteem both come attached to the human ego, and an ego that’s hurt by a loss is further damaged by a financial loss caused by one’s perceived intelligence letting them down at a crucial time. When working for multiple hours a day, one looks for peace and joy when passing time or looking for amusement. To be subjected to a financial loss repeatedly harms that venture. Finally, when participating in skill games with co-workers or friends, one can often let the loss get to their head as a failure to attain bragging rights, leading to poorer social lives.

Problem gamblers generally have similar traits and come from similar demographics. Problem gamblers are associated with being young males. They could have a history of substance abuse and often play under peer pressure or the guise of socialization. Nowe et al. (2018) found that people of Hispanic or Asian ethnicity were at significantly higher risk of developing sports related problem gambling habits and addiction as compared to others. The study also determined that those who needed help the most were the least likely to find it. However, they are also the least likely to find targeted prevention, intervention, or treatment services in many states to help deal with their problem gambling. The chart below summarizes gambling disorders, who they affect the most, and consequences of having a gambling disorder.
Problem DFS players were found to suffer worse than the average sports gambler. This is important to note because problem gambling encompasses all aspects of gambling—casinos, skill-based games, and betting. On average, it was found that DFS players were worse off than the average problem gambler in many respects. They were four times as likely to report suicidal thoughts, more likely to report substance abuse, and more likely to report mental health problems. Despite these damning statistics, they had the least outlets to seek help for their problems (Nower, Caler, Pickering, & Blaszczynski, 2018).

This was a major factor in prompting this research. Yes, the financial implications can be bad. But just because somebody is making money or breaking even in their betting or gambling...
pursuits, doesn’t mean their addiction is not a problem. It manifests itself in many ways, and young males of Hispanic or Asian ethnicity are most likely to suffer. This pattern was also evident in New Zealand where the Māori and Asian population suffering from gambling addictions was larger than their share of the overall population. With such sweeping issues when it comes to just fantasy sports, one must be careful and aware when incorporating instant mobile online sports gambling in the United States economy, which have a large Asian and Hispanic population along with many others.

8. **Betting and Advancements in Technology**

Technology has added massively to sport betting’s addictive nature. Earlier, before the advent of the smartphone or the internet, bets had to be made at a local bookmaker. Settlements were in cash and bet slips would have to be kept safely till the event was over and the wager settled. (Smiley, 2017) The rise of mobile technology and the internet has essentially cut out the inefficiencies of the betting process and have made the journey from wanting to place a bet to settling it a matter of seconds, as it has done with most other things. With a digital sportsbook, one can choose and build their bet, use funds from their credit card or bank, keep track of their bet, and store their earnings in their sportsbook account or can choose to cash out.

Now, technological advancements have not only made standard betting a more linear process, but have also revolutionized the types of bets. Bets on game results or specific events have always been possible pre-game at bookmakers, and even live betting at the bookmakers, but this is a niche event and was not possible or practical on a large scale. Technology has changed that. It has enabled the rise of proposition bets and micro-betting. Micro-betting and proposition
bets are those bets that can be made on instant outcomes during a live match. An example of a proposition bet that illustrates micro-betting is placing a bet on which team scores the next basket in a basketball game, or whether the next basket would be a 2-pointer or a 3-pointer in a basketball game.

Such bets have been made possible only because of technological advancements, but they have also exacerbated problem gambling and sports betting addictions. Australian studies found that from those who engaged in micro-betting, 78% were considered problem gamblers (Russell, Hing, Browne, Li, & Vitartas, 2019). LaPlante et al., (2014) found that 11 out of 16 online gamblers had a significant association with problem gambling. Micro-bets particularly target the problem gambler’s impulsive disposition as discussed before, making an already bad addiction worse.

Technology has also been the foundation of creating a whole new industry: video games. While human civilization has always had some history of competition or athletic events, video games have been enabled purely because of how far technology has come, especially since the 20th Century. Although it is still primarily a recreational activity, competitive gaming has grown exponentially over the last 20 years and the term ‘eSports’ has found its way in the modern vocabulary.

As with any competitive event, the betting industry has found its way to eSports. eSports have become increasingly more organized and professional. For example, the Call of Duty league requires a $25 million investment (Report: OWL, CDL franchise debt could be reduced, 2022) to own a franchise in the league, with many venture capital funds and businesses acquiring stakes in these franchises. With the organization and professionalism of these events increasing, betting companies have realized the potential for introducing betting in eSports. Sources (Grove,
2016) estimated that $7.4 billion dollars were wagered on eSports in 2018 alone, projecting it to grow to anywhere between US$13 and US$23 billion by 2020. For comparison, the eSports industry itself earned a respectable revenue of $1.5 billion by 2020 (Warman, 2017), although significantly smaller than the number of wagers. The entire US betting market was around $40 billion dollars in 2018, making eSports a significant a big pool as a percentage of the whole. Sweeney, Tuttle, and Berg (2021) explain how eSports incorporate micro-betting and proposition bets in addition to regular moneyline bets in their games. Common proposition bets in games like “League of Legends” or “Dota 2” enable bettors to wager on something called ‘f10k’- first 10 kills- which is determined by the team that gets to “kills” first in that round (Sweeney, Tuttle, & Berg). As discussed before, proposition bets are a significant contributor to problem gambling and betting addictions, and eSports can also prove to be similarly problematic in adding to the plight of problem gamblers.

9. Role of Businesses in Sports Betting

The biggest role any of the actors has to play in the rise of gambling globally is the businesses that run it. Inherently, it is a business run on customer sentiments and cash flows. With customers who are generally desperate to utilize their services again, betting companies are generally firms that face inelastic demands when prices are increased but can attract a lot more non-bettors with competitive odds and promotions, making their lower price demand elastic. Essentially, betting companies have the luxury of knowing their customers are going nowhere, and if they hit the sweet spot, they can get even more customers. The only thing they must be wary of is their competitors, who can offer better odds and more promotions to entice new bettors. Yes, betting is intrinsically addictive, but the following examples illustrate how betting companies consciously promote their products to reach even more eyeballs and to ensure people
return to their sportsbooks, whether through standard advertising or through forging psychological associations.

The tool most aggressively employed by these betting companies in an attempt to woo viewers is marketing. Betting company marketing and advertising is all pervasive. It’s ever present on most hoardings and television adverts, especially during sports. In the United Kingdom, where betting has existed legally for much longer, 10 of the 20 Premier League teams in 2020 had betting companies as their main shirt sponsors (Score and Change, 2019). Betting companies have acquired the naming rights for several major stadiums (Major bookmakers as football club sponsors, 2017). Additionally, betting advertising is prevalent on social media in the United Kingdom as well as in the United States. The graph below shows the level of youth awareness of gambling advertisements on social media websites in Great Britain in 2020, by frequency. It clearly illustrates that of all the options provided, young people in the United Kingdom see gambling advertisements more than once a week.

(Lock, 2021)
Betting companies take advantage of unique techniques and psychological biases in order to implicitly and explicitly promote their product. One such technique is the marketing convergence. Lopez-Gonzalez, Estevez, and Griffiths (Marketing and Advertising Online Sports Betting: A Problem Gambling Perspective) explain this in their 2017 paper. This technique relies on the entire sport financial and content ecosystem being interconnected and symbiotic. A simple sponsored link in an online newspaper featuring a great player’s past goals in anticipation of an upcoming fixture could be profitable for the newspaper, the sponsor betting company, the data and statistic companies used by fans, teams, betting companies, and newspapers. The player featured in the article may not have any affiliation with any betting company, but their mention and likeness is enough to boost the activity in the whole industry based on one match and name.

Betting companies also rely on other psychological techniques. Lopez-Gonzalez et al. (2017) explain the use of the psychological bias known as the “representative heuristic”. Betting companies word their bets in a unique way which combines an unlikely event (and thus a profitable one for a betting company if bets are placed on it) with an event that is perceived to be extremely likely by the better. It is unlikely the Golden State Warriors lose to the bottom placed team, but psychologically, it may some more likely that Stephen Curry will score at least one three-pointer and the Golden State Warriors lose to the bottom placed team, even though the actual mathematical probability of the latter event occurring is less than that of the former. Still, the idea of Stephen Curry scoring at least one three-pointer makes that bet more attractive to a bettor, and subsequently, more profitable for the betting companies. Tactics like these are a classic example of what makes betting more addictive and feeds problem gambling behavior. To a bettor, losing it once seems like bad luck, because practically, that seems like a much safer bet
because of how it is phrased. As such, it will draw bettors into betting on it repeatedly in different matches.

Betting companies also utilize gender stereotypes and nostalgia to their advantage in their advertising campaigns. Lopez-Gonzalez et al. (2017) explain that they appeal to the classic masculine attributes of loyalty, knowledge of sports, and courage to appeal to the average bettor who is a young male. They also rely on nostalgia. Sporting activities evoke feelings of childhood excitement and nostalgia and can make problematic advertising seem harmless, unlike advertising for alcohol which can only target adults and evoke memories of the present or young adulthood, and not childhood.

Betting companies also make betting seem like a risk-free activity, and make it seem like a guaranteed win for intelligent and knowledgeable participants. Lopez-Gonzalez et al. (2017) emphasize that betting companies do this by implementing and entrenching three characteristics of betting in their advertisements: it’s a normal activity, mistakes are not fatal, and that it’s a social activity. While solitary betting is more symptomatic of a gambling problem or betting addiction, like solitary drinking would be for an alcohol problem, research also suggests that group betting or betting as a social activity can be as as problematic in accelerating addictions as solitary gambling.

All these marketing techniques, along with the launches of several betting marketplaces in more and more states over the last three years has led to record figures in the betting industry. The figures for the total US gambling industry over the last three years is shown in the graph below.
10. The Survey and its Purpose

Part of the challenge with problem gambling and betting addictions is identifying and diagnosing them before the problem become serious. As the saying goes, prevention is better than cure. To try and achieve that, it’s important to understand two things: what are signs of developing a betting addiction, and which of the current various institutions has the responsibility to help aid and curb these addictions. Current research has found characteristics of those more susceptible to gambling problems as discussed earlier. Some of these characteristics include being a young male of Asian or Hispanic ethnicity (Nower, Caler, Pickering, & Blaszczynski, 2018). Most of these problem gamblers never find the help they need according to
many studies, and suffer from betting addictions and gambling problems, often in conjunction with another co-occurring disorder according to Rutgers (Lister, Maas, & Nower, 2020).

While existing research acknowledges problems in mental, emotional, and social life of a problem gambler as a side-effect of problem gambling and betting addictions (Bjerg, 2010), it doesn’t clearly identify symptoms that indicate that someone is a problem gambler or sports bettor. It is important to classify what makes a problem gambler a problem gambler, and whether problem gamblers themselves agree with this definition. They may not agree with it, or may not even see that they have an addiction, which can also be a crucial finding indicating the need for external help and the need for a third party observer. Many things could classify a problem gambler.

“How much?” is the first thing that comes to mind when thinking about defining any sort of problem or addiction. How much alcohol one consumes is the obvious question to ask someone who suffers from alcohol addiction. However, that same logic need not apply to gambling problems. If someone is losing a significant sum of money on betting, yes, that could be an indicator of a problem. But that logic implies that if they play with large sums of money but turn a profit or break even, then it isn’t a gambling problem. That is not necessarily true, since research in the past has suggested even profitable yet problem fantasy sports players suffer in other ways.

Other symptoms and indicators of problem gambling or betting addictions could be measured by understanding the effect of sports betting on different facets of the lives of potential problem gamblers. This could be understanding the effect of sports betting on their relationships with their families, their ability to bond with friends, their stress levels at work, their need to seek
advanced financing to facilitate betting, their own desire to bet less or more, and if they want to bet less, would they need help in achieving it.

Another thing that’s important in treating and preventing betting problems and addictions is understanding whose responsibility it is to do that. It may be a joint burden, but it can be one institutions responsibility more than it is the others. Are governments more responsible so that they can provide the necessary help and regulations, or are betting companies taking advantage of the disadvantaged and should be providing the right resources and implementing failsafes to protect the ones at risk?

To this end, this research included designing a survey, implementing it, and processing the responses to ascertain or better understand the plight of problem gamblers and sports bettors. Understanding what sports bettors in the US consider a problem is key to solving the problem itself. The survey was anonymous, and no personal information or details were collected. The questions were meticulously designed to attain demographic information and incorporated questions that were designed as Likert scale response options that gave respondents different scenarios to agree or disagree with in varying degrees. Some Likert options included “You feel shame when you lose money while betting on sports” and “Betting companies need to do a better job protecting users against sports betting addictions”. All these questions along with several other details were subject to IRB approval and CITI certification.

The idea for this survey was to act as a pilot study for what an ideal survey with the right resources and the right scale could achieve. This study is extremely important, and the idea behind designing it was to further existing research, and to show how that should take place given the right resources and access. It’s designed to be the next step between theoretical implications of problem gambling and sports betting addictions, and how to practically
understand these solutions and administer practical solutions. Right now, literature focusing on how to solve problem gambling still don’t concretely define a gambling problem. This study and this survey aim to be that middle step between recognizing that there’s a problem and solving it. This study should be focused on active gamblers or bettors, and those who are or were suffering from problem gambling or betting addictions. Since this is not a survey open to any and all participants, operationalizing this survey was limited to posting it onto relevant subreddits like “Sports Betting”, “Gambling Addiction”, “Gambling”, and “Fantasy Sports”. It’s important to administer it to both these groups because of what the responses will illustrate. The problem gambler responses will illustrate what the psychology, mindset, behavior, and symptoms of problem gambling and betting addictions will look like and comparing those to the responses of those who are active gamblers that don’t consider themselves problematic will show the extent to which self-diagnosing does or does not work. It is unlikely that when confronted, an actual problem gambler that has not accepted their condition might give an honest answer about their gambling, much like someone with an alcohol addiction might not give an honest answer when asked about how many drinks they consume. The absence of a guarantee that an answer is honest given that is a sensitive subject is a potential roadblock with ‘self-report’ surveys and can definitely be worked upon in the future.

An ideal survey should include the same mix in the pool of participants, with a mix of active bettors and past or present problem gamblers or betting addicts. The constraint with reddit is that nobody is obliged to participate, and the quality and diversity of responses is not guaranteed. However, the benefit is that it is free. With the right funding and capability to operationalize this survey, concrete answers will appear and make it a more rigorous process. The idea survey would have a high response rate but not have too much of a selection bias. There were other
ways of getting more participants, like mobilizing a class of MBA students. But that is not an ideal scenario, that is a convenient scenario. For relevant, rigorous research, funding would be necessary.

11. Conclusion

Sports betting is a newly introduced phenomenon in the United States, and like many other practices, different cultures have different norms and practices. What might be considered a “traditional bet” in the UK, might be a sign of a problem gambler in the US. While financial losses maybe the first marker of a problem sports bettor, is a profitable bettor not a problem bettor even if it has other negative ripple effects in other aspects of their life. These nuances and differences are key to understanding what makes a problem gambler or sports bettor. Without understanding what the problem is, attempts to solve it are moot. Only once these problems are defined can solutions be implemented, and only then can sports betting truly thrive as a business that is not only profitable, but also one that protects those that are at highest risk of suffering because of it.
12. Bibliography


13. Appendix
Survey Questions:

Demographic Questions

1. What gender do you most identify with?
   a. Female
   b. Male
   c. Other
   d. Prefer Not to Say

2. Age_

3. Are you of Hispanic/Latino/Spanish origin?
   a. Yes
   b. No

4. How would you best describe yourself?
   a. American Indian or Alaska Native
   b. Asian
   c. Black or African American
   d. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
   e. White
   f. Other

5. "What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed?"
   a. Some High School
   b. High School
   c. Bachelor’s Degree
   d. Master’s Degree
e. Ph.D. or Higher
f. Prefer Not to Say

6. Are you married?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Prefer Not to Say

7. “What is your annual household income?”
   a. Less than $25,000
   b. $25,000-$50,000
   c. $50,000-$100,000
   d. $100,000-$200,000
   e. More than $200,000
   f. Prefer Not to Say

8. What is your current employment status?
   a. Employed full time
   b. Employed part time
   c. Seeking opportunities
   d. Retired
   e. Prefer not to say

9. Number of Children __

10. How would you describe your political view?
    a. Very Conservative
    b. Slightly Conservative
c. Moderate

d. Slightly Liberal

e. Very Liberal

f. Third Party/Unaffiliated

**Screening Questions (5-point Likert scale)**

1. How often do you bet on sports? (Not at all/Occasionally/Sometimes/Often/Very often)

2. How much do you bet on sports as a percentage of your discretionary income? (Less than 20%/ 20%-40%/ 40%-60%/ 60%-80%/ 80%+)

3. How much of your time do you spend betting or thinking about betting? (Less than an hour a week/A few minutes every day/ A few hours a week/ An hour a day/ Multiple hours a day)

**Main Questions** (all 5 point scale questions- strongly disagree/disagree/neither agree nor disagree/agree/strongly agree)

1. You think you have a sports betting problem.

2. You think about sports betting more than anything else.

3. Your friends and colleagues bet on sports.

4. You rely on sports betting to connect with your friends and colleagues.

5. Your job is stressful.


7. Sports betting affects your relationship with your family.

8. Sports betting results affect your performance at work.

9. You have had to delay expenses to accommodate sports betting.

10. Sports betting has affected you when making family decisions.
11. Sports betting has been a factor when making work decisions.
12. You follow sports betting more than the actual sports themselves.
13. Sports betting has an effect on your mental health.
14. Losing money while sports betting curbs your desire to bet more.
15. Making money while sports betting curbs your desire to bet more.
16. Betting on sports is easy and a quick process.
17. You feel shame when you lose money while betting on sports.
18. You feel proud when you make money while betting on sports.
19. You think you need to gamble less.
20. You need help to gamble less.
21. Sports betting should be legalized all over the United States.
22. Betting companies need to do a better job protecting users against sports betting addictions.
23. Governments need to actively participate in curbing betting addictions.
24. Betting addictions do not need to be curbed.
25. Sports betting has a negative impact on your finances.
26. Sports betting has a negative impact on your relationships.
27. Sports betting has a negative impact on your career.
28. Sports betting has a negative impact on your mental health.