

THIS WEEK

- **FOBT report published**
- **California online poker bill introduced**
- **Columnist: Michael Golembo on nostalgia**
- **Tweets of the week**

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TOP STORY

LADBROKES CEO TO DEPART

Richard Glynn will leave UK bookmaker in 2015



Outgoing Ladbrokes CEO Richard Glynn

Richard Glynn is to step down as CEO of Ladbrokes, the UK operator has announced. Glynn, who has been with the FTSE 250 company since April 2010, will leave at the end of his five-year term next year.

A re-structuring of Ladbrokes' operations, particularly digital services, was Glynn's aim when he assumed his position, as he attempted to double its share price by the end of his initial tenure. However the bookmaker's online business has continued to struggle financially, which played a big part in Ladbrokes' overall profit dropping by 49.7% year-on-year for the first half of 2014.

It was announced in November that retail director Nick Rust would be leaving the company to become chief executive of the British Horseracing Authority in April 2015, and it seems that Glynn will leave around a similar time once a successor has been found. An official Ladbrokes statement said Glynn had agreed to remain in post "as required to ensure an orderly transition".

Glynn said: "I will continue to serve the company to help ensure a smooth succession. I look forward to the company, the shareholders, our

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partners and in particular everyone in the team reaping the benefits, over the next few years, of all that has been sown.”

Glynn’s departure follows comments in August when he said: “I’m not planning on going anywhere.”

Ladbrokes chairman Peter Erskine thanked Glynn for his contribution, stating: “On behalf of the board, I would like to thank Richard for his leadership of the company and his considerable achievements in delivering a new digital future for Ladbrokes. Ladbrokes has been transformed and is a far stronger company as a result of his work.”

Analyst Simon French of securities company Cenkos believes it is likely there will be an external appointment to replace Glynn.

“We would expect the group to appoint an external candidate given the recently announced departure of Nick Rust, who would have been the most likely internal appointment,” he said.

KEY POINTS

- Richard Glynn to step down as Ladbrokes CEO
- Departure expected around April 2015
- Analysts believe an external replacement is likely

UK GAMING MACHINES REPORT PUBLISHED

RGT findings questioned by campaigners

A report on Licensed Betting Office gaming machines in the UK has found that it is possible to distinguish between problem and non-problem gambling behaviour.

The Responsible Gambling Trust, a charity which aims to minimise



gambling-related harm, published its findings on Monday, and has since come in for criticism from those opposed to gaming machines, in particular fixed-odds betting terminals.

The research was conducted independently by experts in social research and gambling behaviour, and was provided to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the UK Gambling Commission.

But critics feel that the 1,200-page report is biased in favour of the gambling industry. Matt Zarb-Cousin [pictured] of the Campaign for Fairer Gambling said: “Whether or not fixed-odds terminals cause problem gambling is not being addressed by this research. The trust is asking the wrong questions, which is what happens when you let the industry set the parameters.”

KEY POINTS

- The Responsible Gambling Trust has published its report on Licensed Betting Office gaming machines

- Some parties have castigated the report, claiming it has not looked into the right areas

US CALIFORNIA ONLINE POKER BILL INTRODUCED

New law expected for 2015

A new online poker bill has been introduced in California by Assemblyman Mike Gatto [pictured]. The legislation would see licensed cardrooms and Indian tribes in the state able to apply for a ten-year permit to operate online poker, while also banning operators which were active in California after 31 December 2006.

The bill marks the first steps towards an expected legalisation of online poker in 2015.

Gatto’s website said: “California could receive significant revenue for merely regulating and legitimising an industry that Californians already participate in but send their dollars overseas.”

KEY POINTS

- Assemblyman Mike Gatto has introduced a California online poker bill



Tweets of the week

“Cyril must be turning in his grave to see what Glynn did to his business”
Independent bookmaker Pat Potter [@potterthebookie] referring to the late Ladbrokes owner Cyril Stein

“Responsible Gambling Trust promised conclusions on whether FOBTs are addictive and the impact of £100 stake. We basically got a whitewash”
The Campaign for Fairer Gambling’s Matt-Zarb Cousin [@mattzarb]

“Seems like new CA online poker bill would require accounts to be established in person”
Chris Grove of Online Poker Report [@OPReport]

GUEST COLUMNIST

"BACK TO THE FUTURE"



by Michael Golebo
Operator and provider sales & marketing director

"A strange phenomenon is occurring across many industries and sectors as we head into 2015, and the online casino market is no different. You may have seen the news recently that vinyl record sales in the UK have surpassed one million units for the first time since 1996, and brands that many middle-aged people will be familiar with such as Lego seem to be stronger than ever. Indeed, one look at Hollywood's latest releases in Jurassic Park and endless comic book rehashes would seem to suggest there is a serious trend afoot. Oh and whisper it quietly but typewriter sales are on the rise too. Marketers have shouted from the rooftops for decades that sex sells. While that may be undeniably true, there is a new kid on the block with significant purchasing power – nostalgia. The desire of consumers to reconnect with favourites from their past or years gone by hasn't escaped the online slots either. The online casino industry has seen smaller boutique slot game makers like Thunderkick find success with game releases that hark back to a simpler era. And I expect this trend to continue. Similarly, we at SkillOnNet have seen the

rise in demand from players to interact with these so-called classic titles and took the decision in early 2014 to partner with Williams Interactive to integrate the authentic Barcrest slot games to our casino platform.

I had a hunch that UK-based players would love seeing their old favourites online and ready to play, but I don't think any of us expected the surge of interest in the games that we've had over on SlotsMagic.

One of the joys of having both B2C and B2B businesses under one roof is that we get immediate feedback from consumers in real time, which in turn informs our B2B decision making. I find it absolutely fascinating to look at which games our players are choosing, how much time they're playing for and what games are performing best. Noting the steady rise of 'classic' titles up our most-played list, we sprang into action.

Many readers will remember well the classic film Karate Kid, which hit screens across the world in 1984. Yes, you read that correctly, some 30 years ago now. Others will have preferred the 80s exploits of Jean-Claude Van Damme in films such as Bloodsport or Kickboxer.

It was with these influences and others in mind that SkillOnNet developed a new 3D slot set in a martial arts dojo called Ninja Master. Harking back to the 80s with its eastern theme, the game comes complete with carved wooden symbols and paper lanterns. The five-reel game follows the development of a young and keen ninja as he develops his skills to achieve rewards.

We spent a great deal of time on Ninja Master to make sure the details were

absolutely spot-on, including design, functionality and, crucially, attention to detail that would chime with our nostalgic players.

The feedback we have had from our players and our partners has been astounding. Ninja Master has been our top performing slot title for a number of months now and it doesn't look like any title is going to shift the budding Ninja Master off the top spot any time soon.

Credit for the success of titles such as Ninja Master and others goes firstly to the designers and developers who work tirelessly to produce fantastic games that players want to play time and time again.

However, with the generation who grew up playing Space Invaders when it first broke onto the scene in 1980 reaching middle age, there is likely to only be an increase in demand for titles lovingly tinged with nostalgia. Expect 2015 to be very much back to the future."

Michael Golebo is sales and marketing director for European casino operator and software provider SkillOnNet. He combines that with a similar role at EGamingOnline (EGO), one of the biggest affiliate platforms in the gaming industry

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