



WEEK 42

FRIDAY 16 OCT 2015

THIS WEEK

- Berlin Affiliate Conference special
- Calls for legal gambling on politics in US
- Betway customer in world record win
- Columnist: Angus Panton on gambler loyalty

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TOP STORY

FOUR AMAYA EXECUTIVES SACRIFICED

Regulator instructs PokerStars provider to fire four individuals who failed character test



PokerStars operator Amaya has been forced to part company with four executives in a deal with the New Jersey Division of Gaming Enforcement that saw it return to the Garden State.

The regulator has allowed Amaya to operate its PokerStars and Full Tilt brands in New Jersey, but only after it agreed to fire four employees that failed a "good character" test.

Amaya announced in September it had been granted approval to operate both brands in New Jersey. Its US operations were shut down by the US government on Black Friday in 2011 and its founder Isai Scheinberg faced a federal indictment for allegedly violating the 2006 Unlawful Internet Gambling Enforcement Act and the Illegal Gambling Business Act.

But it embarked on a long campaign to return to the state and the DGE and it finally succeeded last month.

The regulator needed to investigate Amaya's \$4.9bn acquisition of Rational Group, the previous owner of Stars and Full Tilt, and revealed its findings in August last year.

The DGE has now released an order of Amaya's transactional waiver detailing its investigation into the PokerStars owner.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE ►

The DGE's investigation threatened to derail Amaya's bid to return to New Jersey

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It ordered Amaya to get rid of "four individuals identified by the Division as having failed to establish the requisite good character, honesty and integrity required by the Act due to their involvement in the business activities of the PokerStars entities between the enactment of UIGEA and Black Friday", by the end of January 2016.

The DGE said in the investigation report that plenary investigations were conducted into Michael Hazel, Rational CFO; Rational COO Israel Rosenthal; Serge Bourenkov, general manager of PYR Software, a Scheinberg-founded company understood to be the technical development arm of Rational; and Charles Fabian, reportedly former head of games systems development at Pocket Kings. Pocket Kings is a now liquidated technology and marketing consulting provider and was a subsidiary of Full Tilt.

Speaking about the investigation, online gambling consultant Chris Grove told *Gambling Insider*: "Given that the DGE laid out several specific conditions for approval stemming from the investigation, it seems to me that there is an extremely high chance that the investigation could

have ultimately resulted in PokerStars not returning to New Jersey."

KEY POINTS

- Amaya must "separate from employment" four individuals in order to run PokerStars and Full Tilt in New Jersey
- The individuals were not named but the names of four individuals that had been investigated by the DGE were mentioned
- The DGE released its findings into Amaya's acquisition of Oldford Group

M&A

LADBROKES CORAL £1.35BN FINANCING ANNOUNCED

Gala Coral's debt will not be transferred to the enlarged group



Financing for Ladbrokes' planned merger with Gala Coral is to be provided to Ladbrokes by a syndicate of relationship banks to the sum of £1.35bn.

It was announced in July that the operators had agreed the terms of a recommended merger, which is subject to clearance from the UK Competition and Markets Authority.

Gala Coral's debt will not be transferred into the enlarged Ladbrokes Coral group at the merger's completion as a result of the financing.

The new financing will be available for drawing subject to completion of the merger and has three tranches. Tranche A is a £600m term facility for October next year and subject to extension options, January 2018. Tranche B is a £400m revolving credit facility for October 2020 and Tranche C is a £350m revolving credit facility for June 2019.

KEY POINT

- Ladbrokes has announced £1.35bn financing for its merger with Gala Coral

US

VEGAS OPERATOR CALLS FOR LEGAL POLITICAL BETTING

South Point Casino exec thinks casino political betting would not be different to betting on everything else

It is time for casino gambling on political elections to be legalised in the US, according to the lead odds maker at Las Vegas-based South Point Casino.

Casino gambling on elections is banned by federal law, but Jimmy Vaccaro wants to see that change. He told CNN: "We've been saying for the past thirty years, what is wrong with it? What's the sense in not being able to do that, since we can book just about everything else?" "[The presidential election] would be the biggest thing we'd ever booked. It would make the Super Bowl look like a high school football game."

The Daily Telegraph reported that Britain's bookmakers were expecting £25m in bets to be placed on the UK general election in May.

While this debate raged on, Wynn Las Vegas hosted Hilary Clinton



and fellow candidates for the first Democratic presidential debate for the 2016 US election on Tuesday.

KEY POINT

- Jimmy Vaccaro wants political betting to be legalised in the US

UK

BETWAY PUNTER BREAKS WORLD RECORD AFTER EIGHT-FIGURE WIN

A £30 deposit turned into a win of over £13m, breaking the record set in 2013

A British soldier is planning an extravagant spending spree after winning a record-breaking £13.2m on Microgaming's Mega Moolah online slot game on Betway.com.

Jon Heywood saw a TV ad for Betway's online casino, deposited £30 and

started placing 25p bets. After seven minutes, he landed the winning spin.

When converted into euros, the £13,213,838 prize he scooped worked out at €17,879,645, beating the previous world record payout for an online slot game of €17,861,813 set in Finland in 2013.

Heywood, whose father is awaiting a heart and lung transplant, said: "I couldn't believe that I'd won all this money at the time – and it still hasn't sunk in."

"It's amazing. The first thing I will spend it on is the best possible medical treatment for my dad. That's more important than anything."

KEY POINT

- The world record for an online slot payout has been broken



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BAC PREVIEW

AFFILIATES SET TO FLOCK TO BERLIN

Former Microsoft bigwig among the speakers at affiliate conference

More than 2,200 delegates will congregate at the Berlin ExpoCenter from October 22-25 for the Berlin Affiliate Conference.

BAC is the sister show of the London Affiliate Conference and the Amsterdam Affiliate Conference and is usually held in Barcelona, but has moved to Berlin this year. Seventy per cent of attendees are expected to be affiliates.

Highlights of the agenda for the opening day include welcome drinks sponsored by WPN Affiliates, followed by an official networking party co-hosted with Excellence in iGaming.

EiG, which is also being held in Berlin, concludes on the day that BAC begins.

The exhibition will open in Hall 22 at 10am on day two, and seminars will run for days two and three. Among the speakers on day two will be Rahul Sood, former creator of Microsoft Ventures and now CEO of eSports operator Unikrn, who will be speaking about the emerging new sector in the gaming industry.

Running alongside BAC will be the

Financial Partners Expo. The seminar list for the Financial Partners Expo includes a talk on binary options brokerage from Rachel Sartini, founder of consultancy B2Binary. Online marketing and SEO seminars connected to BAC will take place in Conference room 1, while seminars for the Financial Partners Expo will be held in Conference room two.

Proceedings will conclude with the Sunday session, sponsored by Intertops. Attendees will be welcome to have a final drink and will be given a final chance to network at the Europa Center.

Delegates can register online before travelling to the show. All of those who do not register before 6pm GMT on October 20 will be able to collect their badge during any of the onsite registration times. If delegates wish to register after travelling to the show, they can do so from day one, and this will allow them to walk into the conference with their badge, wristband and delegate guide the following day, without needing to queue.

The Crowne Plaza Berlin City Centre is the official hotel for the show. Preferential rates can be given for those who book through the hotel operator.



ICE 2016 AND EIG PARTNERSHIP

LEAVE FEEDBACK FOR LONDON SHOW

Visitors to EiG in Berlin can influence the impending ICE trade show that takes place in London in early 2016 by visiting the "ICE Conferences Wall" in the Berlin Arena venue. They can post suggestions on how to improve ICE, the world's largest B2B gaming event, on the wall, and the ideas will be fed through to event organiser Clarion. Jo Mayer, marketing director responsible for Clarion's gaming brands, said: "EiG brings together many of the smartest minds and most successful entrepreneurs in all of gaming and the ICE Conferences Wall is designed to inspire a collaborative approach to innovation."

BAC PREVIEW - CONFERENCES

Visitors to the Berlin Affiliate Conference will be treated to a wide range of conference talks that explore some of the key issues currently affecting the industry, from eSports and virtual reality to SEO and social media. Here are some of the highlights, including a star appearance from former Microsoft executive turned operator Rahul Sood:

Friday 23 October – 11am - 11.30am

Virtual Reality in the gambling industry

Alexandre Tomic, speaker for the seminar, is co-founder of SlotsMillion, the first virtual reality online casino. The seminar will focus on developments in VR and how it is being used by operators and providers in the i-gaming industry. Affiliates can learn how VR can increase their earnings.

Speaker: Alexandre Tomic

Friday 23 October – 12.30pm - 1pm

eSports explained: The next big thing for affiliates

The growth of eSports is defined by SuperData Research, which predicted in May that the global eSports audience is 134 million. Rahul Sood, CEO and co-founder of eSports operator Unikrn, will discuss the market and the opportunities within it.

Speaker: Rahul Sood

Friday 23 October – 2.05pm – 2.50pm

CEO Panel - future of iGaming affiliate marketing

The future of affiliate marketing will be viewed by C level executives. The evolution of the channel and insight into future strategies will be on the agenda, as well as recent traditions within the affiliate landscape.

Moderator: Allan Petrilli

Panellists: Ory Weihs, Johnny Devitt

Saturday 24 October – 2pm – 3.30pm

SEO & the future of search

This is a seminar not to be missed by affiliates with a focus on SEO, as a 90-minute discussion will be devoted to the latest trends. Recent Google updates and insight into the most

important features of organic search will be on the topic list.

Speakers: Alexandra Tachalova, Fili Wiese

Saturday 24 October – 4pm – 4.45pm

The things they don't tell you about launching a binary options brokerage

What are the most common mistakes made by brokers when launching a brand? This seminar will attempt to answer that question and will advise affiliates on how to make sure all bases are covered when venturing into a new area.

Speaker: Rachel Sartini

Saturday 24 October – 4pm - 4.35pm

Retaining players: Staying social to improve player lifecycle

Rounding off proceedings in Conference room 1 will be a seminar looking into social media and how players can be reached, even when they are not active on the site. Social media developments and Facebook EdgeRank will also be covered.

Speaker: Sharon McFarlane



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BAC PREVIEW - OVERVIEW
"A WINDOW TO OUR INDUSTRY"



Shona O'Donnell
Head of operations,
iGaming Business

As part of our special Berlin Affiliate Conference preview, we have interviewed a series of organisers and exhibitors to gather their thoughts ahead of the big event. We begin with Shona O'Donnell, head of operations at BAC organiser iGaming Business, who runs through some of the show's highlights, explains the decision to move from Barcelona to Berlin and discusses key issues to be debated at the show.

What was behind the decision to move BAC to Berlin this year?

We were getting feedback that the industry was ready to move to a new

city so we surveyed the industry and more than half wanted to move. Berlin was the clear favourite. There is a real buzz about the event and we are seeing overall numbers up 16%, so it was definitely the right thing.

What are the standout features of this year's show?

This is our biggest ever BAC and we have completely sold out of floor space, which is extremely exciting. Banc de Binary have Dietmar Hamann on their stand on Friday, so well worth a visit for any Liverpool, Newcastle or Bayern Munich fans. 10Markets will be holding a draw every 30 minutes and anyone with an international driving licence can take their pick of a spin in either a Lamborghini Gallardo Superleggera or a Ferrari 458 Italia there and then. Of course each day ends with a networking party and we have some of the best venue sin Berlin for delegates to enjoy.

What has been your aim with the conference content this year?

We want to have sessions that give those attending practical take always they can implement that will really impact their business. We now have a dedicated resource in the team working on content and I think you can really see the impact on this. We have a number of new speakers both from within and outside the industry that we haven't had before.

What do you think will be the big topics and issues people want to discuss and learn about this year?

There is always so much happening in the industry but I think people will be really interested to learn more about the opportunities in the German market and the first session on Friday will give great insight into this. I also think eSports will be a big talking point, it was always going to be but the recent news regarding DraftKings and FanDuel [an insider trading scandal] will make it even more topical and something everyone will have an opinion on.

BAC PREVIEW – HAPPYBET

“HIGH POTENTIAL FOR SUCCESS”

GI Friday caught up with some key exhibitors heading to the Berlin Affiliate Conference to find out why they are attending. We begin with Thomas Kalman of HappyBet.

Thomas Kalman

Affiliate manager, HappyBet

Why will you be exhibiting at this year’s Berlin Affiliate Conference?

The year 2015 is the year of development and renewing for both of our brands. HappyBet just launched its brand new online sportsbook this summer and built an Online Marketing team to focus on the internet business in the fastest and most effective way. Platincasino, offering the famous Merkur Gauselmann’s online slots as an exclusive partner as well as many casino games, is just about to lift the curtain for its new responsive website. And of course there’s also a B2B milestone to be announced: our partnership with Income Access as the new affiliate software for both brands.

What special promotions, events or activities do you have planned for the show?

Our approach is to attract two target groups. For the new affiliates visiting the show there will be a very special 50% revenue share deal for the first three month of the partnership. And for our valued long-term affiliates there will be customized flows and adverts. Also, we are very much looking forward to seeing the HappyBet referees and the Platincasino mascot, Jack Wild, in action. The BAC visitors should watch out for the three for invitations and extraordinary give aways.

What sort of business will you be looking to do at the show?

Of course we are here to meet and greet all affiliates and present the new developments and features of our portals. BAC is one of the main affiliate and branch events of the year - and we are happy to have the show as a home match in Germany. But we are also expecting a fruitful exchange with our business partners and competitors attending.

Why do you think people should want to meet with you at the show?

Three main reasons to visit our stands for all affiliates: getting to know two of the best performing portals in both the sportsbook and casino environments, building up a long lasting and satisfying partnership with us as a team of branch experienced professionals - and of course reliable and convenient affiliate surroundings thanks to our tool Income Access.

What aspects of the show are you most looking forward to personally?

The exchange with the affiliates and partners - the new ones as well as the well known. Gathering to share experiences and ideas is the most important option at BAC. And the base for high potential and successful partnerships.



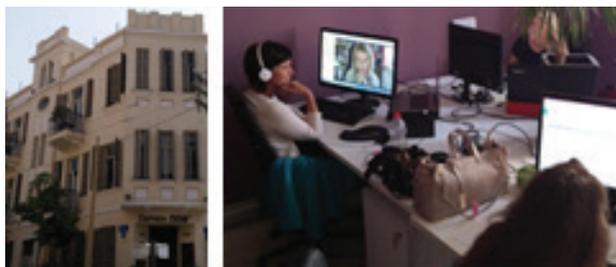
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BAC PREVIEW – CRAZY REWARDS
**“MEETING OUR OLD FRIENDS,
AND MAKING NEW ONES”**



Andrew Bryant
Affiliate
programme
manager, Crazy
Rewards

**Why will you be exhibiting
at this year's Berlin
Affiliate Conference?**

We have found that selectively exhibiting at affiliate shows brings us some good new affiliate business. It also brings our brands to visitors' attention and that tends to increase our business over time. We use these events to meet up with some of our affiliates and therefore get to know them better and to see what the current trends are and the other offers available. It also helps to talk to other affiliate programme managers.

**What special promotions,
events or activities do you
have planned for the show?**

For Berlin we are planning to have a special promotion where new affiliates can get 60% revenue share for the first 90 days. We will also offer this deal to existing affiliates that add a brand that they are not already promoting.

**What sort of business will you
be looking to do at the show?**

We are looking for the larger affiliates now who are looking for very focused brands on the Scandinavian market. We have some of the top brands in those countries. Our business is expanding nicely with players proving to be loyal to the brand and having a high life time value. So we are an ideal partner for these focused affiliates.

**Why do you think people
should want to meet with
you at the show?**

With our top ranking casinos in Scandinavia we tend to fit in well

with affiliates that are looking for a focused approach and as important, retaining those players they are able to attract by offering great loyalty promotions. We have a great team who support the affiliates business helping them achieve good results and giving them the materials they need. With our show offer, no affiliate who is interested in the Scandinavian market, can lose in trying our brands for their customers.

**What aspects of the show
are you most looking
forward to personally?**

We are looking forward to meeting our old friends and making new ones. Getting to know what we can do to help them achieve their goals and also finding out what is affecting them so we can adapt to meet their needs. It is this personal approach that is the most satisfying to me, and Berlin in October can only mean Ocktoberfest, so having fun and enjoying the beer is a must.

BAC PREVIEW

"ESPORTS IS A HOT TOPIC"

Aly Lalani

Marketing director, Pinnacle Sports

Why will you be attending this year's Berlin Affiliate Conference?

Like any other big international bookmaker it's important to have a presence at conferences like BAC. It's a great opportunity to hold meetings with our current affiliates to highlight exciting changes to our programme and listen to any concerns. We have a huge international network of affiliates so this allows us to meet face-to-face with affiliates from around the globe. We will also be showcasing the great features of our affiliate programme to potential new affiliates.

What in particular do you have planned for the show?

eSports is a hot topic so we're going to meet up with our key eSports affiliates as well as some prospective partners. It's a big focus of growth for our business, and we are keen to communicate to potential new

affiliates that we are the number one eSports bookmaker out there, having taken our first eSports bet in 2010.

What sort of business will you be looking to do at the show?

I have budget to allocate for the right kind of advertising opportunities within our current affiliates. Naturally I will be looking to bring on-board some new affiliates, while this is a good opportunity for straight-forward account management/optimisation. We will be providing our affiliates with a detailed analysis of their accounts to see where they might improve, how we can help drive activity, as well as highlighting interesting conversion patterns - such as acquisition from regions/niches that they might not be aware of.

Why do you think people should want to meet with you at the show?

In 2015 the Pinnacle Sports Affiliate programme paid out over \$10,000,000 in commission, so we represent a significant value proposition. Our players have a higher average life time

value than most other bookmakers and tend to bet with us for longer. We also have a risk free commission structure based on betting volume. These are significant selling points for prospective affiliates, so I am hoping to meet some new faces who want to enjoy these benefits.

Which aspects of the show are you most looking forward to personally?

Germany has a great reputation for hospitality in October, so I am looking forward to a great atmosphere. It will be a chance to meet existing and prospective affiliates from Germany and Europe. There are some very good seminars lined up with big industry names which I am certainly looking forward to.



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BAC PREVIEW

"BERLIN IS THE NEW BARCELONA"



Darren Moore
Managing
director, Betting
Gods

Why will you be attending this year's Berlin Affiliate Conference?

Berlin is the new Barcelona, and I just had to be at the first conference. If it's anything like the other conferences, it will be a great few days connecting with industry associates through the many networking opportunities these events present. Plus exploring what new exhibitors the change of venue has attracted.

What in particular do you have planned for the show?

Catching up with old friends has to be top of the list, plus there are a few

people whose names pop up in my inbox or Skype each week, and finally I'll be able to put a face to the name. I'm also keen to attend some of the speaker sessions such as App Store Marketing, future of iGaming and the eSports topics. It is also interesting to take a look at the FinancialExpo – see if they're doing anything different that we're missing, or some strategies that can be carried across to our industry.

What sort of business will you be looking to do at the show?

I try to attend as many of the speaker sessions as possible. Even if they're not specific to the niche in which we operate there's always a nugget or two of information that I can implement or adapt. It's also interesting walking around looking at the various stands, exploring what techniques and strategies some of the bigger players in the industry are using to develop their markets, attract new customers, and how they handle customer retention.

Why do you think people should want to meet with you at the show?

I'm happy to meet and chat with anyone – current business partners, potential partners, and industry friends such as GI's very own Vas Bountzouklis. Vas goes way beyond just being a point of contact; he is a valued and knowledgeable friend in what can often be a complex or 'who you know' industry. I'm happy discussing the future of affiliate marketing, the affiliate/operator relationship, or if I can be brutally honest, any topic that justifies another beer.

What aspects of the show are you most looking forward to personally?

On a personal level, I'm excited about exploring another city, and having the chance to put my academic German to use. That's the beauty of the conferences we attend in the industry; the perfect blend of business and pleasure and having a different office window for a few days.

BAC PREVIEW – VISTA GAMING

“BUILD STRONGER WORKING RELATIONSHIPS”



Fabiola Olaso
Marketing director, Vista Gaming

Why will you be attending this year’s Berlin Affiliate Conference?

Each conference brings together thousands of affiliates and operators, all networking together. The synergy of partnership, loyalty and growth within the industry are all key factors that are important to us all. Knowing each other through meeting face to face helps build a stronger working relationship and gain a better understanding of each other’s needs.

What in particular do you have planned for the show?

Apart from the opportunity to meet up with so many of our current affiliates and introduce ourselves to potential new affiliates, the show allows us to reward the hard work done by the affiliate community. We have inserted inside the affiliates delegate bags over 2,500 real scratch cards that will award over \$120,000 in prizes with a top prize is \$5,000 up for grabs.

What sort of business will you be looking to do at the show

We will be looking to close or finalize some of our pending deals with existing affiliates in person at the show. Catching up with our existing affiliates allows us to receive valuable feedback and an understanding of our affiliates changing needs. Meeting with new potential affiliates is obviously a key feature of the show and it is great to meet with new people.

Why do you think other firms should want to meet with you at the show?

People can get a greater understanding of the great potential in the products that we have to offer. As a trusted operator since 1996, we offer one of, if not the best, bingo software packages on the market. As a market leader we use the latest technology, constantly developing our package which allows us to release new and exciting features that players just can’t find anywhere else. We have recently launched a new Casino which in a short period of time has become very successful with a selection of over 350 games for players to enjoy.

What aspects of the show are you most looking forward to personally?

The show also brings with it some great speakers, sharing knowledge which you can relate to in your day today challenges within the industry. I personally look forward to hearing other people’s views and suggestions as to key elements within the industry such as increasing conversions through the latest techniques. My passion for the industry is what drives me to become a better director.



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BAC PREVIEW – BETCART “LOOKING FORWARD TO INNOVATIONS”



Anna Dell
*PR manager,
Betcart*

Why will you be exhibiting at this year's Berlin Affiliate Conference?

We will be attending to showcase betcart's products and solutions to our peers in the gambling and casino industry. Betcart is an online sportsbetting and casino website that offers over 1,000 bet types on more than 30 sports and over 500 casino games. Betcart also boasts virtual sports and live casino services. Our leading providers include SBTech for sports, Microgaming, iSoftbet, Betsoft, Net Ent, and Playn'go for casino, Kiron Interactive for virtuals, and Sportsman Media for live streaming. With over 60,000 events per month,

there is always something to keep our players active and engaged.

What sort of business will you be looking to do at the show?

Our primary purposes for attending the BAC are to meet with our current partners and expand our affiliate network. We have a strong affiliate programme called betcartpartners that enables affiliates to earn up to 60% revenue share or enroll in CPA or hybrid commission plans.

Why do you think people should want to meet with you at the show?

Aside from our generous commission offerings, Betcart's success up to this point is due to our excellent attentiveness and customer service. If you elect to join our affiliate program we will do everything in our power to ensure you have the best marketing materials needed to reach your target market and that the players you refer to Betcart have a satisfying entertainment experience. This ensures they will return to

our site again and again and your commissions will grow indefinitely.

What special promotions, events, or activities do you have planned for the show?

Betcart is offering a €2,500 bonus for affiliates who sign up at BAC as well as a surprise gift. We will also be presenting details about our unique Cycle Reward commission bonus. All loyal affiliates who join our program will benefit twice annually from Betcart's CR commission bonus. To calculate CR we take the average commission from the three highest earning months during the previous six month period and determine the corresponding percentage of additional revenue (up to 50%) that will be awarded.

What aspects of the show are you most looking forward to personally?

I am most looking forward to hearing about the latest innovations in gaming and interacting with other industry professionals one-on-one. Please stop by stand M23 and say hello.

BERLIN AT A GLANCE

THINGS TO DO IN THE CAPITAL CITY

A host of cultural delights awaits anyone exploring this historic city
Should attendees at this year's Berlin Affiliate Conference get the opportunity to spend some time away from the Messe Berlin, there are plenty of other attractions that the German capital city has to offer. Here is our guide to five places to put on your must see list.

Reichstag

With its position at number one on Trip Advisor's list of 579 things to do in Berlin, it is impossible for us to leave the parliamentary building out. The building has stood since 1894, and the Council of Elders of the Bundestag decided in 1991 that it should be restored and used as the seat of an all-German parliament.

Olympiastadion Berlin

You may not necessarily need to be a sports fan to know of the status this venue holds in sporting history. The stadium was the scene

of US athlete Jesse Owens' four gold medals at the 1936 Olympic Games. After being reopened in 2004, the stadium played host to the 2006 FIFA World Cup final. Adult tickets for stadium tours can be purchased from €5.50 at a reduced rate.

The Holocaust Memorial

The memorial was opened in 2005 to mark the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II. It is located near the Brandenburg Gate in the heart of Berlin and is on an area of approximately 19,000 square metres. Over 2,700 concrete pillars commemorate those that died in the Holocaust.

Memorial of the Berlin Wall

Situated in the middle of the city and at the site on Bernauer Strasse, the memorial is 1.4km long and contains the last remaining piece of the Berlin Wall. The barrier completely separated West Germany and East Germany between 1961 and 1989 and its demolition officially began in 1990.



Berghain

If partying is more your thing than sightseeing, then Berghain may be exactly what you're looking for. The nightclub opened in 2004 in an abandoned power plant of the former East Berlin. It was described by The New Yorker as "the most famous techno club in the world".

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GUEST COLUMNIST

“MAINTAINING QUALITY AND GAMBLER LOYALTY”



by **Angus Panton**

*Director of
power and
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Gambling is big business. It's no longer just the domain of the high street or about keeping the social and occasional gambler happy. It's about providing more choice and ways for people to access the games they enjoy, anywhere and at any time. Recent advances in online and mobile technology have made gambling more accessible than ever. As well as appealing to those who already like a flutter, it has also opened up a whole new captive audience and world of opportunities for traditional gambling companies, platform providers and game developers. Recent figures suggest that 44% of European

gambling operators intend to spend more than £3m on online initiatives.

But with these opportunities and enhanced market reach also comes increased competition and consumer expectations, with thousands of games vying for attention in a crowded market. To capitalise on the receptiveness of a new gaming generation and build a loyal fan base, games now need to be released faster, updated more often, and with fewer bugs, and be timely and relevant. Gamers expect a seamless experience, no matter which platform, device, or what time of day they chose to place their bets. The omni-channel environment presents a number of challenges for traditional operators - as they look to compete with new, online players in the market - as well as the developers and platform providers. User demand is accelerating the pace of IT change, with new releases and updates now expected much more rapidly. As such, delivery needs to happen without a hitch in order for operators and game developers to steal a march on the competition.

For gambling companies it is not just omni-channel but omni-release. Gambling operators face the challenge of not just releasing their games, but ensuring that games can be released on all devices and platforms simultaneously. The value of the entire digital journey - from the customer relationship through to billing, security and gaining loyalty - should not be underestimated. One technical hitch or one bug in the system can quickly be highlighted by players, with negative comments going viral immediately. No wonder that for nearly a quarter of European gambling operators, improving user experience is seen as one of the biggest challenges they face in the next 12 months.

Regulatory requirements also add to the complexity and speed of new game releases. The UK Gambling Commission has updated technical and security standards which will be coming into force at the end of October. A large part of this requirement is that all games must meet the new specifications and be tested by an accredited third party before being released to market. Those operators who

fail to meet the deadline or to work with an accredited test partner will simply not be able to release their games.

Unfortunately there is no "one-size-fits-all" solution, with each platform requiring different coding and a tailored approach to getting the game to market. Mobile, tablet, and laptop versions of a game each need to be tested separately and be ready to cope with the onslaught of incoming traffic on release day and beyond. Any delay in a new release could leave developers and operators in danger of disrepute and lead to a loss of hype before they have even had a chance to compete. Ensuring they can not only meet but exceed customer expectations on different operating systems and platforms is vital to their success.

The key challenge, for all stakeholders involved in the race to attract and retain a growing online gaming community, is to streamline the development process. This will ensure that each new release is robust, of high quality, reliable and profitable.

To keep up with market demand and the ever growing complexities

of new releases, there are two key approaches that developers and operators can take to ensure the quality of omni-channel game releases.

Firstly, enabling a faster and robust release cycle is a key component for success and one which can be achieved by looking at game development in a quality-driven way is crucial. Taking an agile and test-driven approach will lead to quick and accurate releases and put a framework in place for developers and operators to react efficiently to market demand and regulatory change. The iterative nature of the process ensures that regular testing along the way leads to an end result fit for purpose. It is this assurance of effective testing in line with the changing technology and ensuring compliance, which leads to success in such a competitive market.

Secondly, taking a DevOps approach to game development will support an agile methodology throughout the process. Adopting this collaborative approach to software development allows for continuous integration. However this time-efficient method

will only succeed with a strong focus on quality and expertise throughout the life of a game's software.

This way of working can and should be the reality for developers and operators. Working with an independent, accredited testing partner will ensure that developers and platform operators can not only remain compliant but keep up with the pace of change. With quality of service and market reputation key to growing a loyal customer base in the expanding omni-channel gaming environment, getting it right first time is vital in order to stop gamers placing their bets elsewhere.

Angus Panton has been at SQS Group since 2004 after joining from Nettec. SQS consultants provide solutions for all aspects of software quality. It is headquartered in Cologne, Germany, and employs more than 4,000 staff. SQS has offices in Germany, UK, US, Australia, Austria, Egypt, Finland, France, India, Ireland, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Norway, Singapore, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland and UAE.

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