



# WEEK 52

## FRIDAY 25 DEC 2015

### THIS WEEK

- Paddy Power Betfair deal approved
- DraftKings delays UK launch
- New York casino licences granted
- Columnist: Olly Joshi on data



#### TOP STORY

## POKERSTARS LAUNCHES SPORTS BETTING

BetStars goes live following initial delay



David Baazov's Amaya has unveiled its sports-betting brand

PokerStars, owned by Amaya Gaming, has launched its new sports-betting brand. BetStars will initially be available in select jurisdictions on the domains Betstars.com, Betstars.eu and Betstars.uk, as well as on dedicated iOS and Android applications.

Initially offering over 25 sports including football, tennis and basketball, the BetStars brand will also carry eSports and poker. More sports, including horseracing, are intended to be added throughout 2016. The brand will also feature a range of in-play betting options. The launch of BetStars will be supported by a marketing campaign in the first half of next year.

PokerStars anticipates the brand will expand into additional key jurisdictions throughout 2016, extending its reach to approximately half of PokerStars' unique active poker customers. BetStars will also offer its customers a seamless experience between sports betting, casino and poker, with a single wallet for all three services.

PokerStars had initially planned to launch a sports-betting offering in the first quarter of 2015. According to Amaya CEO David Baazov, the delay was undertaken in order to "enhance the consumer product experience and complete the product offering."

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Rafi Ashkenazi, CEO of Rational Group, said: "We are very excited about the launch of the BetStars brand, and expect it to be one of the most talked about sports-betting sites in 2016 as it continues to evolve with new products and features that we believe will set us apart as a betting brand for the true sports fan."

Meanwhile, Amaya has dismissed an ongoing dispute regarding the activities of PokerStars in the state of Kentucky as "frivolous and without merit". Kentucky claims it is entitled to recover the alleged losses of state residents who played real-money poker on the PokerStars site between 12 October 2006 and 15 April 2011, around three years prior to Amaya's acquisition of the brand.

Amaya added: "To the extent the PokerStars entities may be ultimately obligated to pay any amounts pursuant to a final adjudication following exhaustion of all appeals and other legal options, Amaya intends to seek recovery against the former owners of the PokerStars business."

## KEY POINTS

- Operator PokerStars has launched its sports-betting brand
- BetStars will initially be available in select jurisdictions across three domains, and on mobile
- Launch had previously been delayed for product enhancement purposes

## M & A

### SHAREHOLDERS OK PADDY POWER BETFAIR DEAL

**CMA has also given the green light** Paddy Power and Betfair shareholders have approved a proposed merger between the two companies.

In August this year the operators announced plans to merge in a deal that would lead to one of the world's biggest gambling businesses, worth up to £5.8bn.



The merged business will be called Paddy Power Betfair and will have its headquarters in Dublin.

A Court meeting saw Betfair shareholders approve a scheme of arrangement related to the merger by 262 votes to two.

The Betfair General Meeting saw 99.999% vote in favour.

Meanwhile Paddy Power shareholders approved the deal at the Irish firm's EGM.

The deal has also received clearance from the UK Competition and Markets Authority (CMA).

## DFS

### DRAFTKINGS DELAYS UK LAUNCH

#### DFS operator to go live in early 2016

Daily Fantasy Sports (DFS) operator DraftKings has delayed its planned UK launch until early 2016.

Having received its UK Gambling Commission licence in August, DraftKings initial aim to launch in October 2015 was pushed back to December.

DraftKings spokesperson Pippa Hancock confirmed to Bloomberg Business that the launch of the operator's UK-facing site has now been postponed until "early next year".

Meanwhile California has held a hearing regarding DFS, in order to frame the state legislature's approach to the industry in the future.

DraftKings and major rival FanDuel were granted a stay of injunction by a New York appellate court last week against the attorney general's ruling that DFS constitutes a game of chance under state law, making it illegal in the Empire State.



Montreign, will form part of a \$1.3bn resort on the grounds of the old Concord Resort in the Catskills. Rivers Casino was granted a licence for a \$300m venue in Schenectady, near Albany, while the \$425m Lago Resort & Casino will be in the Finger Lakes town of Tyre.

The Commission's five members unanimously approved each without comment, with principals and associates therefore clearing criminal background checks and applicants meeting environmental, legal and financial requirements.

It is projected that the casinos will support more than 3,200 full-time jobs and generate \$265m in taxes. Licensing fees are projected to total \$136m.

The Olympic Movement Code on the Prevention of the Manipulation of Competitions was published on Thursday, following its approval by the IOC Executive Board last week.

Effective from the Olympic Games to be held in Rio de Janeiro in 2016, any sporting organisation bound by the Olympic Charter will be expected to respect the terms of the new code.

Athletes will be in violation should they bet on a competition in which they are directly participating, the sport in which they compete, or any event in a multi-sport competition in which they are a participant.



**US**  
**NEW YORK GRANTS CASINO LICENCES**

**Commission approves three projects**  
The New York State Gaming Commission has approved three casino licences in the state. The largest of the three projects,

**INTEGRITY**  
**IOC PUBLISHES NEW GAMBLING CODE**

**Athletes in violation if they bet on their sport**

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has published a new code aimed at addressing issues related to gambling and match-fixing in Olympic sports.



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## GUEST COLUMNIST

## "THE RISE OF DATA AND SOCIAL MEDIA"



by **Olly Joshi**  
Co-founder,  
WantMyBet

The sports-betting industry is evolving rapidly, and as we head into 2016 it seems there are no signs of a slowdown. The very nature of how people around the world are placing bets is shifting, as both social media and the availability of data play an increasingly important role in consumer decision-making.

Betting has traditionally been a very private and isolated affair. Whether offline or online, placing a bet has been a very narrow experience in terms of factors influencing a gambler's decisions: a punter's own 'sporting knowledge', attractive bookmaker promotions, or just the back of newspapers. However, the rapid rise of social media and communication apps have meant the casual bettor has evolved into a data-hungry, opinion-seeking and socially competitive gambler.

The old school influences become less and less relevant with every passing day as the newly evolving social gambler becomes increasingly savvy. With a swipe of a finger, there's free access to an almost unlimited range of opinions, whether it's a WhatsApp group of mates or a tipster on your Twitter feed.

The role of social media within sports betting doesn't come without its issues. The ability for anyone to broadcast their opinion makes it increasingly difficult to distinguish good from bad – there is no visible track record for these loud mouths. Therefore, credibility can only be judged from RTs, followers and a miracle accumulator win rather than a steady winning record. This is where accessible data comes in.

Backing up a bet with statistics is an area of sports gambling that has become more and more apparent of late. A recent report carried out by Mintel showed that 68% of sports bettors consider it essential to research form and statistics before placing a bet. With companies such as Opta providing granular data on players and markets, additional insights are now available to the masses. This figure is only going to increase as punters continue to become smarter in their betting behaviour.

We expect the integration of detailed data into mainstream sports betting will be a big focus point of 2016, and will see it becoming more integral to a casual gambler's pre-match/in-play betting ritual. It will be interesting to see how this element of gambling is more widely integrated into bookmakers' advertising campaigns over the next year, especially with Euro 2016 quickly approaching.

In addition to merging statistical data with betting, another key influence on user betting decisions is social competition. With over 3.5m players on the official Premier League fantasy football site, it is clear to

see football fans love to prove they have superior sporting knowledge to their peers. We're seeing an interesting transition phase at the moment with companies in the US such as FanDuel and DraftKings successfully combining social competition, betting and fantasy.

So how does this fit into sportsbook gambling? Is there an opportunity to take this element of social competition and use it to enhance a user's sports-betting experience outside of fantasy? The answer: absolutely. I believe this is the future of sportsbook gambling and it was a cornerstone of our strategy when we created WantMyBet.

Thanks to social media and accessible data the industry is changing, and if bookmakers want to keep up they need to ensure they not only integrate themselves with social platforms but also adapt their own offerings to accommodate the newly emerging fantasy sport fans. If they don't, we could see the likes of FanDuel and DraftKings acquiring some serious market share when they launch in the UK in the imminent future.

*Olly Joshi (27) is co-founder of WantMyBet, a social network for sports betting that allows users to search and discover the latest bets from tipsters around the world. From pub punters to professional gamblers, the site allows anyone to share their bets with the WantMyBet community.*

**OUT NOW: Look out for the November/December issue of Gambling Insider's print magazine, featuring a Security Special in which we explore the various security issues operators and suppliers are grappling with in this constantly evolving industry.**

