BARRY GIBSON TO RETIRE, BET365 SETTLES

THIS WEEK

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  Nikolina Gabelica

KSA: THE ITALIAN JOB?
This week saw big stories for both Entain and bet365. The former saw Chairman Barry Gibson announce his retirement while bet365 agreed to a regulatory failures payment of £582,120 ($737,336)

**BET365 AND GAMBLING COMMISSION**

The Gambling Commission and bet365 have settled on a £582,120 ($737,336) penalty to be paid by the operator for anti-money laundering (AML) and social responsibility failures.

The penalty will be paid in part by Hillside (UK Gaming) and Hillside (UK Sports), licence holders for bingo and casino products and betting respectively. UK Gaming is set to pay £343,035 of the penalty, while UK Sports will pay the remaining £239,085. The failures were noted during a compliance assessment by the Commission in March 2022 and comprise of several components.

Social responsibility failings including an ineffective Early Risk Detection System for understanding the impact of interactions on customer behaviour, customer journeys lacking needed personalisation to mitigate gambling harms and an approach to evaluation that was ‘unable to effectively ascertain whether a customer had read and understood the information or advice provided within its interactions.’

In terms of AML failures, these included ineffective know your customer (KYC) and customer due diligence triggers against AML risks, a failure to implement financial sanction checks on new customers before their first deposits and failure to perform independent verification checks, instead relying on annual self-verification performed by customers more heavily than deemed acceptable.

Considering the Gambling Commission’s previous penalties, including a £6m penalty against Gamesys in January, this figure just shy of £600,000 is relatively minor. “The policy and procedural failings may not have been as severe as those at other gambling businesses in recent years but they were failings nonetheless,” said Gambling Commission Executive Director of Operations Kay Roberts.

“We expect high standards from operators in terms of keeping gambling safe, fair and crime-free and will always take action to correct any failings.”

When thinking of recent penalties to operators by UK authorities, the first that may come to mind is Entain’s fine by HMRC last August. Speaking of which...

**OVER AND OUT**

Entain Chairman Barry Gibson announced his retirement this week, with his tenure in the role and as part of the Board expected to close in September (or potentially earlier if a new permanent CEO to replace Jette Nygaard-Andersen is found).

Gibson first joined the Entain Board in February 2020 and oversaw several notable moments for the company, including its rebranding from GVC and the resolution of the company’s £585m ($740.7m) fine from HMRC for Bribery Act breaches from legacy operations in Turkey.

Entain Senior Independent Director Pierre Bouchut described Gibson as having “worked tirelessly to navigate the company through numerous challenges,” stating “I would like to sincerely thank him for his enormous contribution to this business.”

Gibson said: “It has been a privilege to lead the Board of Entain for the past four years and while I have thoroughly enjoyed my time at this dynamic, exciting and innovative business, I reflected a little while ago that 2024 would be the right time for me to retire.”

**STELLA SIDE-STEPS**

Replacing Gibson will be Stella David, the current Interim CEO for Entain. David has been with the company since 2021, starting as a Non-Executive Director and Senior Independent Director before becoming Interim CEO following Nygaard-Andersen’s resignation in December.

The move comes to the surprise of few, with many suspecting that David would be unlikely to take on a permanent CEO role. David’s career history has seen her take on Interim CEO roles before, including at Clarks in 2018. However, the majority of her roles have seen her in Non-Executive Director roles, mostly outside of the gaming industry, with examples including Dominos, Bacardi and HomeServe UK, to name a few.

Still, many in Entain have reacted positively to David’s upcoming Chairman role, with Bouchut stating: “We are delighted that Stella will be taking over as Chair. Her extensive Board and Chair experience as well as her time as Interim CEO will be hugely beneficial to the Board and the wider group.”

Gibson commented similarly, saying: “I am delighted that, in Stella, Entain has an exceptional successor who knows the business well and has already proven herself to be a firm hand on the tiller.”

This opens the next question – if not David, then who will become CEO? No names have particularly stood out as clear contenders for the role, though the search has been described as ongoing and going smoothly.

**GI VERDICT**

The past year has been a challenge for Entain; nine-digit fines, a scramble to complete acquisitions to keep growth on trajectory and the resignation of its CEO are hardly the smallest of hurdles. Nothing quite as dramatic has happened so far this year – thanks to David, perhaps, though we will have to see if this extends into her role as Chair.

For bet365, meanwhile, the settlement with the Gambling Commission reflects a business willing to reflect on its failings – something hopefully learnt following investigations into AML failings last month by the company’s Australian division by the Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre (AUSTRAC).
KSA: THE ITALIAN JOB?

According to the latest KSA (The Dutch Gambling Authority) figures, the Dutch online gaming industry has only continued to grow after a ban was implemented on untargeted advertising, and in a few different ways too.

Last July, the KSA enforced its ban on “untargeted advertising for online games of chance,” meaning that no material could be shown on radio, TV, newspapers or magazines, as well as outdoor areas.

Of course, the Netherlands isn’t the first country to do this. Italy blocked gambling advertising (altogether) on 1 January 2019, which not only raised worries regarding the local market, but also concerns over whether this mindset would eventually spread across Europe, until there was no gambling content on display anywhere on the continent.

You may notice, being in 2024, that neither of these things have happened. There was no gambling-related mass hysteria yet Italy reported that the ban didn’t even affect the gambling figures. But did the Netherlands fare the same way?

The short answer is yes, actually. Firstly, there was an increase in the total number of active accounts: 969,561 in December 2022 and 1,072,857 in December 2023. This was, obviously, accompanied by an increase in accounts which were made and then abandoned, a jump from 979,075 to 1,901,998 in the same respective periods. In the past six months, around 123,000 new accounts have also been created – which is interesting, because one of the only factors that did fall were the amount of visits from people who visited sites but did not sign up or play.

In its statement, the KSA explained: “The report shows that the market has not experienced any noticeable contraction since the ban. However, the number of visits to gambling websites by people who are not players has fallen sharply. People who have already played do not come less often, so the advertising ban mainly affects people who do not yet play.”

So the only people who were affected by the ban seem to be the people who weren’t going to play anyway. Their numbers haven’t exactly dropped off the face of the earth – they’re now the same as returning players to the site. Not only that, but the gross gaming result (BSR) also increased, with a 5% increase in casino games against the house, a 6% increase in BSR per player and a 28% growth in yearly BSR.

So, the number of accounts has increased, spending from players is increasing and less people are being exposed to gambling as a whole. It makes you wonder which country will look at gambling advertising next…
After previously serving as SVP and Corporate Controller for the company, Chang was appointed as Interim CFO in November 2022. Now, his position as CFO has been made permanent.

With 25 years of industry experience, Young joined MotorCasino in 2003. His previous roles at the casino include Director and VP of Slot Operations.

Following the completion of Fanatics’ acquisition of PointsBet US, Hughes – former PointsBet US CPO – has moved into an Executive Leader role with the operator. He joined PointsBet US in 2015.
Another new Executive Leader at Fanatics, with 15 years' industry experience, that has moved over as a result of the PointsBet US acquisition. Mulvihill will move on from his role as VP, Global Sportsbook Trading.

Industry veteran Dr Jennifer Shatley has been appointed to oversee this recently formed body, on top of her current position as President for the Nevada Council on Problem Gambling.

As seen in the first story of this week’s GI Friday, Gibson is due to step down from his role in September 2024. David will then assume the Chairman role; for now, she continues to serve as Interim CEO.
THE WEEK IN QUOTES

“I think it’s actually a good thing. Honestly, I think it’s just going to force operators to be less traditional in the way that they promote their brands.”

Former Paddy Power Head of Advertising, Ken Robertson, speaks exclusively to Gambling Insider sports betting advertisement

“We can learn from other jurisdictions, and we can learn from other international markets, but it’s not as simple as taking something from another jurisdiction and just implementing it. We have to look at the policy environment and what are the best practices?”

Executive Director of the Responsible Online Gaming Association, Dr Jennifer Shatley, speaks exclusively to Gaming America

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<th>COMPANY</th>
<th>NEW PARTNER</th>
<th>VERTICAL</th>
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<td>Land-based casino</td>
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Stories from across the wide-ranging racing market have been prominent this week.

Starting with car racing, BetRivers has been named as the title sponsor for a bonus race in the NASCAR Xfinity Series season. The race, titled BetRiver 200, was formally known as the NASCAR Xfinity Series Dash 4 Cash race and is set to be held on 27 April at 1:30 pm local time. Supporting sponsors for the race include the Delaware Lottery and Rush Street Interactive (RSI).

Moving over to horseracing and the launch of the Circa Sports mobile app in Kentucky. Famous for the Kentucky Derby, the Bluegrass State is a hotspot for horseracing betting and the proliferation of historical horseracing machines (HRMs), with Churchill Downs Incorporated’s (CDI) Derby City Gaming Downtown in Louisville that opened in December offering 500 of the machines. The launch marks the fifth state to host the Circa Sports mobile app.

Finally, in greyhound racing, TripleSDate (TSD) and Total Performance Data (TPD) have partnered with Racing Victoria to integrate a live-odds engine. The engine will provide live odds for bettors at the tracks and will mark the seventh Racing Victoria venue to incorporate TSD and TPD technology, with other venues including Pakenham, Flemington and Moonee Valley among others.

TSD CEO Carlos Santo said: “Commercialising race data has always been at the forefront of TSD’s strategy for our clients.”

Gustaf Hoffstedt, Secretary General of the Swedish Trade Association for Online Gambling, addresses government plans to tackle match-fixing
EASTERN EUROPEAN ROUND-UP: IGAMING EXPANSION IN THE EAST

This week has seen a flurry of partnership activity in the Serbian market, with developments coming from across the Eastern European region.

Firstly, RubyPlay kicked us off by expanding in the Serbian market early in the week through its newly announced partnership with MaxBet. Acquired by Flutter in September 2023, MaxBet holds an estimated 20% online market share in Serbia, which RubyPlay hopes to utilise to enhance its presence in the region. The deal will serve to expand MaxBet's range of gaming options through the addition of RubyPlay titles including Diamond Explosions 7s and Immortal Ways Buffalo.

Over in Romania, 3 Oaks received its official licence for European expansion. The online gaming provider can now draw up expansion plans to bring its iGaming options to the Romanian market. After obtaining a Class 2 Romania licence from the National Gaming Office (ONJN), the company can now expand operations into Romania. This latest development also follows the recent acquisition of certification in both Portugal and the UK, highlighting 3 Oaks’ intention to expand its operations within Europe.

Another development in Serbia saw Swintt reveal its latest deal with Rizk Casino. The Betsson-owned brand will now feature a range of 140+ classic and contemporary slot options, provided by Swintt. This latest move from Swintt marks an expansion into the Serbian market – and allows gamers in the region to access its full suite of Swintt Premium and Swintt Select releases.

THE WEEK IN NUMBERS

$13bn
The acquisition value placed on Endeavor Group following its private takeover by Silver Lake

53%
Year-on-year increase in Macau’s gaming revenue figures for March, to US$2.42bn

100,000+
People have accessed GambleAware’s self-assessment tool since its launch last year
One of the Las Vegas Strip’s longest-standing casino hotels, Tropicana Las Vegas, closed its doors on Tuesday for the very last time.

The venue has been active for 67 years and is said to be the Strip’s third-oldest casino, but it is now making way for the future home of the new Oakland A’s baseball stadium. The plans to repurpose the property had been in the works for several months. Demolition of the casino is likely to take place in October.

This of course marks the end of an iconic venue in Las Vegas but also means yet more sporting influence coming to the city. Las Vegas hosted the most recent Super Bowl for the very first time, which grabbed global attention, emphasised by betting lines extending beyond the field of play, relating to Taylor Swift for example.

While towards the end of last year, it was home to the Formula 1 Grand Prix for the first time since the 1980s, producing record betting handles for sportsbooks.

Nevada’s February gaming numbers saw sports betting revenue increase 13.8% compared to the same period last year and much of this was of course credited to the aforementioned Super Bowl; but it also highlights the growing appeal of sports betting in the city.

There are sports teams such as the Vegas Golden Knights, which plays at the T-Mobile Arena situated on the Las Vegas Strip, but the Oakland A’s move earmarks yet another way that Las Vegas is evolving away from a reliance on traditional casino games; and more towards becoming an epicentre of sports betting opportunities.
COLORADO LAND-BASED GAMING REVENUE

Colorado has reported its land-based casino gaming revenue for February 2024, breaking down total revenue by slots and table games. Total gaming revenue for the month was $85.8m, up 2.2% year-on-year. Of this, Black Hawk was the most significant contributor, generating $66.4m with growth of 2.8%.

Despite this, the most significant year-on-year growth was reported by Cripple Creek, with revenue up 5.1% for a total of $13.5m. Central City was the only casino of the three to report a year-on-year revenue decline, dropping 9.9% for a total of $6m.

Of the state's $85.5m gaming revenue, $72.2m, or 84.2%, was made by slot games. Up 1.1% year-on-year, once again Black Hawk contributed the most significantly to this total. Making $53.7m (up 1%), this slot revenue accounts for 74.4% of the total slot revenue and 62.6% of the state's total gaming revenue.

Cripple Creek made the second-largest amount at $12.6m, up 6.9%. Central City was once again down year-on-year in this metric, making $5.8m with a decline of 9.3%.

In terms of table games, total revenue came to $13.6m, up 8.5%. Black Hawk was the only casino in the Centennial State to see growth in this segment, up 11.5% for total revenue of $12.6m.

Cripple Creek and Central City were both down by double digits for February, with Cripple Creek's table game revenue down 16.4% and Central City down 29.5%. Between the two casinos, table game revenue came to just over $1m, being overshadowed significantly by Black Hawk.

Despite these falls in revenue, Black Hawk was able to push the segment into positive annual growth. In the other two segments, the growth of Black Hawk is similarly reflected in the state's total, due to the significant financial contributions of the casino.

COLORADO GAMING REVENUE FOR FEBRUARY

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<th>ALL SOURCES REVENUE</th>
<th>REVENUE (M)</th>
<th>CHANGE (%) YEAR-OVER-YEAR</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cripple Creek</td>
<td>$13.50</td>
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<td>Black Hawk</td>
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<td>+2.8</td>
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<td>Central City</td>
<td>$6</td>
<td>-9.9</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<th>SLOTS</th>
<th>REVENUE (M)</th>
<th>CHANGE (%) YEAR-OVER-YEAR</th>
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<td>-9.3</td>
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<td>Total slots</td>
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<th>TABLE GAMES</th>
<th>REVENUE (M)</th>
<th>CHANGE (%) YEAR-OVER-YEAR</th>
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<tr>
<td>Cripple Creek</td>
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<td>Black Hawk</td>
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<td>Central City</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total table games</td>
<td>$13.60</td>
<td>+8.5</td>
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NIKOLINA GABELICA,
HEAD OF LOTTERY, EVERYMATRIX

At the company’s new office in Bucharest, Gambling Insider spoke with Gabelica about her time in the industry, EveryMatrix’s new lottery branding and how to gain a WLA Safer Gambling certification

Thanks for joining us. Tell us about your career.
My background is B2C gaming, betting, lottery, casino, both retail and online. It is different and interesting to switch to the B2B provider side. I also previously contributed to the European Lotteries Association (EL) within the Marketing and Communication Working Group, where I learned from many industry colleagues. We discussed and exchanged knowledge on different topics, not only product, but also challenges we faced at the time with private operators, the slower pace of lotteries and how they needed to switch to faster software and gaming environments.

You've been in the industry for over 20 years. How have those previous roles helped you get where you are now?
I’ve learned exactly what to expect from the client side. Sometimes providers develop software, but if you don’t know how to use it… how are you going to develop something? My pain point being an operator was that I was not fast enough. I was not fast to the market compared to others and I could not deliver additional features. So now, I know what operators and clients need.

What was the thought process behind EveryMatrix’s new lottery branding?
Marketing did a great job and I love the light green because it represents sustainability, luck and good fortune combined with EveryMatrix. It is easier to communicate not only on the inside, but also on the outside, that you have a lottery product.

What is EveryMatrix’s history with lotteries?
We have a significant history of collaborating with national and state lotteries, such as Szerencsejáték ZRT in Hungary and OPAP in Greece to name just a few. Our first client was Norsk Tipping in 2018, focusing on casino games. Following that, we partnered with Veikkaus, incorporating our CasinoEngine productivity platform solution, RNG games, and live content. For pure lottery games, our first collaboration was with Malta National Lottery, bridging its IGT Core Gaming System to offer a modern front-end. They kept a legacy system across their retail, and we integrated and provided the online side. Today, players can access both channels across all the products. Looking ahead, we aim to include a full, comprehensive lottery solution to support lotteries through their digital transformations.

What are some of the factors you have to consider when digitising lotteries? Are there any factors people don’t talk about as much?
For the digital segment, security, player protection, data protection. You have to be really careful. For the technology segment, you have to be future-proof because, if you are stuck with technology that cannot adapt over time, you are stuck with legacy systems. Some segments we don’t discuss? It depends on the market. Maybe expectations; on one side you have an operator, on the other you have the providers. What are the expectations? There are differences between different markets. A great example is you cannot offer sports betting in each market with just a unified solution, you have to adjust to the market. It is similar with games, especially draw-based games. So a provider needs to be aware of the specifics for each market.

EveryMatrix was the first iGaming supplier to receive a WLA Safer Gambling certification. What did that process involve?
First, the WLA have prepared a really intensive guidebook. You have the full process available online and the standards that are required. There are two different processes for gaining the certification and, for suppliers, there are a couple of steps you have to go through. Then you have to do a regular recertification process.

We have the technology, but this is not enough on its own. Training, awareness, giving back to the community, and responsible advertising and communications. All stakeholders have to be involved and you have to do research continuously. We won’t stop now that we have the certificate.
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Swintt Studios
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Let's Do This!

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