

Written by [Daniel Ruddock](#) on January 9, 2020

Recent deals highlight football's gambling problem

The relationship between professional football and gambling companies is getting closer every year. Is it time something was done?

Rightly or wrongly gambling has for a long time been a big part of professional football. In recent years there has been an explosion in the number of clubs and TV companies taking huge amounts of sponsorship cash from betting companies. Have we got to the point where their influence is too much?

Problem gambling

Like alcohol and smoking, gambling is addictive and has the ability to destroy lives. The presence of cigarette and tobacco brands, which used to be so prevalent in sports sponsorship, have now been eradicated in UK sports due to legislation and a shift in public attitudes. However alcohol and gambling remain ingrained in sporting culture.

It is impossible to sit down and watch a football match these days without seeing gambling adverts. Whether you are being told to “heed your hunch” on TV ads, or seeing a gambling company’s logo on your team’s shirt, or your eyes being attracted to a name flashing up on the advertising hoardings around the pitch, they are everywhere.

Live football and gambling are so synonymous, you would be forgiven for forgetting it is even something to be questioned.



(Photo by Robin Jones – AFC Bournemouth/AFC Bournemouth via Getty Images)

We are now at the point where of the 44 teams in the top two divisions in British football, 27 are sponsored by betting companies.

BT Sport and Sky Sports are both heavily sponsored, with gambling ads present before and after games. The invention of mobile gambling in particular, is helping the advertisements to be particularly effective.



How the betting industry has become inextricably linked to football

Through sponsorship and advertising,the gambling industry has successfully and deeply hitched itself to the world's most popular game

 the Guardian | Rob Davies | Jan 8

Wayne Rooney, Huddersfield, and The FA Cup



(Photo by Richard Heathcote/Getty Images)

A number of recent deals has put the relationship between football and gambling even more in the spotlight. Wayne Rooney, one of England's greatest ever players, raised eyebrows when he agreed to return to England signing a deal with Championship side Derby County.

The deal was bankrolled via a record sponsorship deal with 32Red, with Rooney also wearing the number 32 shirt. Exploiting a loophole in gambling advertising laws in the country. You cannot sell replica shirts to children with betting logos, but you can buy a Derby shirt with Rooney's number on the back.



Wayne Rooney's Derby shirt number 'exploits loophole in betting rules protecting children'

A "loophole" in betting regulations protecting children is being exploited by Wayne Rooney wearing the number 32 when he joins Derby, says a gambling industry expert.

 BBC Sport

Huddersfield Town's deal with Paddy Power hit the headlines in pre-season when they were fined for the logo on their shirts being too large. There are regulations in place limiting the amount of space a sponsor's logo can take up on a shirt.

It was just a marketing ploy from the company, and Huddersfield now play with sponsor-free shirts, but the way the story took over social media, shows just how effectively gambling companies are at being visible, even if betting itself isn't on display.



Huddersfield Town fined £50,000 over Paddy Power kit stunt

Huddersfield Town have been fined £50,000 by the Football Association in relation to the club's pre-season Paddy Power kit stunt. The Championship club has also been warned over its future conduct

 The Independent | Samuel Lovett | Sep 5, 2019

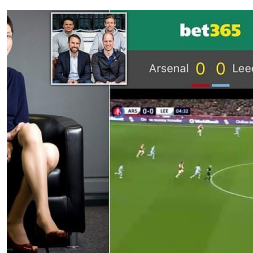
In recent days it was announced the FA had signed a deal with Bet365 allowing them to show live coverage of their flagship cup competition, the FA Cup. To watch the games on their platform you had to place a bet before kick-off, or open an account with at least a £5 deposit. Odds for the game were on display throughout the coverage.

The decision by the governing body to sign a six year deal with a gambling firm has come under fire from MPs and other groups, especially as it came on the same day all kickoffs in the third round of the competition were delayed by a minute to promote mental health awareness.



(Photo by Matt Watson/Southampton FC via Getty Images)

The government responded to an urgent question about the deal, by praising the industry's voluntary measures like the "whistle-to-whistle", initiative, without indicating any appetite to legislate.



FA Cup betting deal's slap in face to Prince William

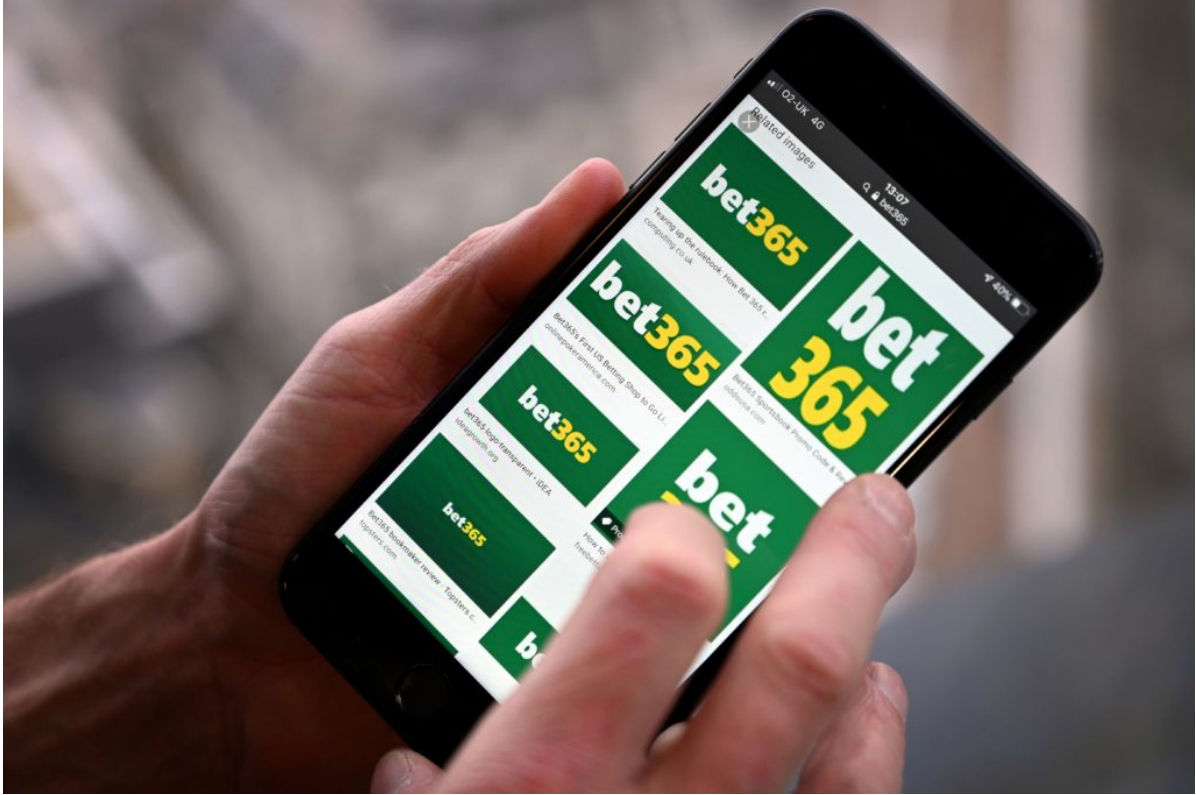
The six-year deal allows Bet365 to show matches on its website and mobile app. It meant most of last weekend's 32 ties were broadcast on Bet365, while only two were on free-to-air TV.

 Mail Online | By Eleanor Hayward Health Reporter For The Daily Mail | Jan 7

Where is it going?

All companies in the industry now champion their commitment to responsible gambling, but brilliant books like Tony 10, a scarcely believable story about a postman who stole millions to support his gambling habit, show that they have a long way to go if they want a place at the table of the decent morals.

Gambling companies sign-up to various voluntary measures like responsible gambling adverts, or making charitable donations to addiction treatment funds, but allowing these huge money making enterprises to effectively regulate themselves, seems at the very least pretty questionable.



(Photo by PAUL ELLIS/AFP via Getty Images)

The Labour Party have said they would ban shirt sponsorship by gambling companies if elected, but given Boris Johnson’s recent decisive election victory, that isn’t happening anytime soon.

Nearly every sports organisation takes money from the industry, from newspapers, to radio stations, to this news aggregator. It is not about pontification, it is about being aware of the increasing influence.

The FA’s decision to get into bed so deeply with Bet365 might be the straw that breaks the camel’s back, in an era where mental health is at the forefront of so much, it is incredibly strange that something so addictive is so often allowed the centre stage.

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