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WEEK 13

FRIDAY 1 APR 2022

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GAMES THAT STRIKE



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THIS WEEK

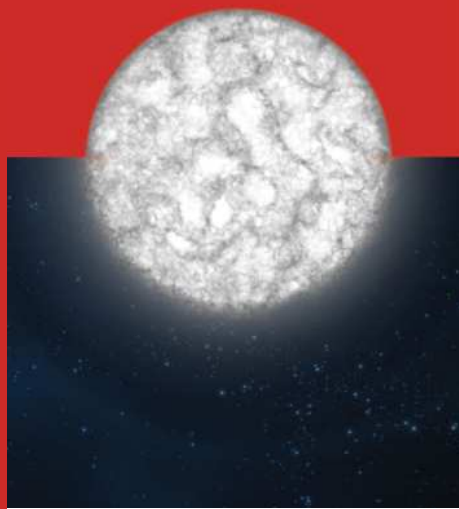
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WEEK 13

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DWINDLE, DWINDLE LITTLE STAR: MATT BEKIER BOWS OUT AS THE STAR CEO

US ROUND-UP: MGM RESORTS, ONTARIO IGAMING, VEGAS F1 & MORE



OUT
NOW



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The Star Entertainment Group bids farewell to long-time CEO Matt Bekier, who resigned amid ongoing legal proceedings

▶ March wasn't a good month for The Star Entertainment Group. As we enter April, the Australian operator is short one CEO and dogged by alleged anti-money laundering (AML) failures.

A public hearing into The Star Sydney was launched by New South Wales' Independent Liquor & Gaming Authority (ILGA) on 17 March; and since then, things have gone from bad to worse for the casino company.

This came after a review was commissioned in October 2021 by the ILGA. The public hearing forms part of this review and, already, testimony given by several former The Star employees has proven damaging.

The hearing was told that Matt Bekier, The Star Managing Director and CEO, reacted angrily to a 2018 report by global audit firm KPMG, which raised concerns about the company's AML policies and procedures.

The Star had engaged KPMG in 2017 to conduct an independent review of its AML and counter-terrorism financing (CTF) programme.

But Paul McWilliams, who served as The Star's Chief Risk Officer between 2016 and 2019, stated that Bekier had refused to acknowledge the group's AML and CTF liabilities when presented with KPMG's report.

McWilliams stated that, during a meeting held to discuss the report's findings, Bekier had said: "It was unacceptable for the report to be prepared in this way, that it was wrong in some respects – material respects."

Bekier's main concerns apparently stemmed from issues raised regarding The Star's relationship with junkets.

"My recollection is that it was a particular focus on this finding that's on the screen now around junkets," said McWilliams, adding: "Without going into the detail of why it was wrong, I think there was even a suggestion that there were doubts about whether the (Casino Control) Act extended in the way that KPMG were implying to junkets."

In a later meeting, attended by KPMG Partner Alexander Graham, Bekier repeatedly disputed the audit firm's findings.

Graham said: "I recall the CEO turning over pages, pointing to things, saying, 'This is wrong,' turning the page, 'That is wrong,' you know, doing that for a sustained period of time.

"And we tried to understand what specific points the CEO believed were wrong, and we just weren't getting the details.

"I do recall there were two, maybe three specific areas that the CEO did stop on and talked us through."

In fact, Graham went so far as to call Bekier "hostile" towards himself and fellow KPMG Partner Jeff O'Sullivan.

"When me and Jeff walked into the room, I recall we weren't greeted. There was no eye contact, you know – we just sat down," said Graham.

"Mr Bekier was sat down, turning the pages of the report, essentially berating us for the whole entire time of that meeting."

Roughly one week after McWilliams and Graham gave their testimony, The Star announced that Bekier had tendered his resignation.

"With the evidence mounting against him, it would appear Bekier chose to fall on his sword rather than face an ignominious sacking"

Bekier informed the group's board that, as Managing Director and CEO, he must take responsibility for many of the decisions the company had made in recent years.

A statement from the group read: "Mr Bekier's decision follows issues raised in the public hearings in connection with the review of The Star Sydney being undertaken by Mr Adam Bell SC.

"While the review remains ongoing, Mr Bekier informed the board that as Managing Director and CEO he is accountable for the effectiveness and adequacy of the company's processes, policies, people and culture. Mr Bekier said the right thing to do was for him to take responsibility."

Bekier's final departure date has yet to be determined, but The Star has confirmed he will step down from the board immediately.

The public hearing will run through 8 April, with testimony to be heard from Andrew Power, Group General Counsel; Paula Martin, Chief Legal and Risk Officer; Mark Walker, Senior Vice President, Premium Services Operations and Greg Hawkins, Chief Casino Officer (New South Wales).

Until recently, The Star had largely evaded the ire of Australia's regulators, but those days are now at an end.

Legal action is already starting to come in thick and fast for The Star, which has been served with a statement of claim for a securities class action in Victoria's Supreme Court.

GI Verdict: With the evidence mounting against him, it would appear Bekier chose to fall on his sword rather than face an ignominious sacking. The Star is likely hoping that, by accepting responsibility, Bekier will serve as a sacrificial lamb which it can serve up to the hungry regulator and in doing so, save its own skin. The casino company is in hot water, and Bekier's voluntary departure may not be enough to keep it at bay, at least not in its current state.

THIS WEEK IN NUMBERS

\$11.9m

Sale of Artisan Hotel Boutique in Las Vegas by Siegel Group



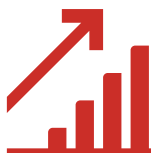
\$100,000



In prizes to be won in Bally's Interactive March Madness Bally Bracket: \$100K Overtime game

22%

Year-on-year growth in annual net revenue for Elys Game Technology for the 2021 fiscal year



\$50

Sign-up bonus for World Series of Poker players in Michigan

\$170m

Acquisition of Pala Interactive from Boyd Gaming



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US ROUND-UP: MGM RESORTS, ONTARIO IGAMING, TABLE TRAC & MORE

Next year, **Formula One** is set to hold a night race on the **Las Vegas Strip**.

Most likely the event will run in the second half of November, potentially to stand alongside Thanksgiving weekend in America.

Start times could be around 10pm, which is 6am in the UK, and will break the usual F1 tradition by taking place on a Saturday instead of a Sunday.

The 3.8-mile, 50-lap track will pass famous landmarks, casinos and hotels, such as Caesars Palace, the Bellagio fountains and the Eiffel Tower.

In an effort to reflect the values of diversity, equity and inclusion which guide contemporary corporate life, **MGM Resorts International** has revealed its new acquisitions of fine art. While not only more broadly representing the variety of human experience, the new artworks also serve to contemporise the company's collection.

Among the artists who will now go on display across MGM Resorts' properties are Rashid Johnson, Sanford Biggers, Derrick Adams, Ghada Amer, Jonathan Lyndon Chase, Thomás Esson and Svenja Deininger.

The arrival of the new acquisitions does not imply the replacing of older works in the collection, and the new pieces will hang alongside the mainstays of MGM Resorts' collection: Sam Gilliam, Lorna Simpson, Nick Cave, Jenny Holzer and Nancy Rubins.

The drive for diversity was emphasised, as many of the newly-purchased works are by artists of colour, women and people from the LGBTQIA+ community.

With the **Ontario iGaming** and single-event sports betting markets set to go live next week, PlayCanada has reported that this new sector will create a slew of new jobs for the region.

According to reports, 1,300 new jobs will become available for Ontario citizens as a wave of new operators and suppliers take up residence in the province.

Some have claimed that this new industry may take jobs away from the land-based sector. However, research suggests that this is unlikely to occur.

All iGaming operators in Ontario must be accredited by RG Check, the **Responsible Gambling Council's (RGC)** initiative to ensure sustainability and responsible gambling, when the market launches on 4 April.

That's the decision of the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario (AGCO) and iGaming Ontario, the two organisations responsible for approving new operators in the Canadian province.

Originally developed in 2010, the RG Check program has been used in the accreditation of land-based casinos in Ontario ever since. The program helps operators evaluate, monitor and manage all aspects of their responsible gambling commitments.

Betsson has launched its mobile app sportsbook product in the state of Colorado.

The launch is under the Betsafe brand, in partnership with Dostal Alley Casino.

The company has also opened an office in Downtown Denver, with the primary purpose of supporting regional B2B operations, while an Account Director for the B2B offering in the US has been recruited.

A Managing Director for the B2C offering is also in place, while such operations will also be run from the Denver office.

Raymond Lin has been appointed as Chief Legal Officer of **Mohegan Gaming & Entertainment (MGE)**.

Lin will oversee and direct all legal and compliance affairs and operations across the group's domestic and international properties.

Lin previously worked as a Partner at Latham & Watkins, LLP, serving as Co-Head of the private equity practice group.

Earlier in his career, he worked at Davis, Polk & Wardwell, and served as a Law Clerk for the Honorable Collins J. Seitz of the US Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit.



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casino to develop
its digital gambling token

8,000

Titles added
to Livespins'
portfolio through
a partnership
with iSoftBet



\$66.5m



In revenue
for XLMedia in
2021, driven by
healthy growth
from the company's
sports vertical

KINDRED TO LAUNCH UNIBET IN ONTARIO, LOTO QUEBEC TO OFFER RED TIGER GAMES

Kindred will enter Canada later this year represented by its flagship brand Unibet, further expanding the company's North American footprint.

Following in the footsteps of fellow operators 888, PointsBet and FanDuel, among others, Kindred has secured approval to take Unibet live in Ontario when the province's regulated market launches on 4 April.

Pundits have touted Ontario as a lucrative opportunity, with the Canadian province home to more than 10 million potential players. With this in mind, Kindred is looking, like many operators, to carve out a customer base early on.

"This is an exciting day and a significant milestone for both Kindred and Unibet," said Amanda Brewer, Country Manager Canada, Kindred Group.

"The iGaming market in Ontario is expected to be one of the largest in North America, which makes it a truly interesting proposition for Kindred."

Unibet's sportsbook and iGaming products will be available to Ontario customers via on.unibet.ca, and the brand's mobile apps will be available to download from the Apple and Google Play Stores after the market launch day.

Elsewhere in Canada, Loto Quebec is set to become the first Canadian lottery to offer Red Tiger games, including its jackpot mechanics.

Following the agreement, Loto Quebec customers will be able to play titles such as Piggy Riches Megaways, Gonzo's Quest Megaways, Primate King and Cash Volt. The operator will also have access to Red Tiger's jackpots.

GI Verdict: Ontario is certainly one of the hottest markets in the industry right now, with many companies jumping at the chance to get in on the action early on.

Red Tiger, meanwhile, has agreed to many partnerships this year alone, signalling its intentions to grow across different jurisdictions.

THE WEEK IN QUOTES

"These new appointments will significantly strengthen our commercial capability across our key markets globally, as we aim to further drive our presence in new and existing markets. I am confident the knowledge and expertise they bring to the team will be of real benefit to SIS and to our operator partners."

Sports Information Services (SIS) Commercial Director Paul Witten after the group announced a string of new appointments and promotions within its commercial division

"We are offering our partners a great opportunity to move more quickly than ever before in complementing their offering with a sportsbook product. BtoBet has built a deserved reputation as an industry leader and this simple, one-stop shop solution allows operators to utilise an outstanding sportsbook offering to get to market quickly and scale at speed."

Pariplay CCO Enrico Bradamante after the group took BtoBet's sportsbook solution live within its Fusion platform

CAMELOT TO LAUNCH LEGAL CHALLENGE OVER NATIONAL LOTTERY LICENCE DECISION

Camelot will take the Gambling Commission to court over its decision to award the fourth National Lottery licence to rival operator Allwyn Entertainment.

According to a report from the Daily Telegraph, the company will this week commence legal proceedings against the Commission, including a judicial review and a High Court bid.

Camelot's legal challenge hinges on an alleged change to the regulator's scoring system used to compare each company's proposal.

The operator purportedly came out on top when applying a 15% "risk factor" discount, which was supposed to be applied to all bidders' financial projections.

However, Camelot is expected to claim that this was later discounted by the Gambling Commission. This change ultimately led the company to lose the licence competition to Allwyn, whose projected contributions to good causes were significantly higher.

The Daily Telegraph further reports

that this sudden change even surprised Allwyn, who had filed its own legal proceedings against the Commission prior to being named the "preferred applicant" on 15 March.

A court battle will likely come as bad news to Allwyn, who would not be able to formally take over as National Lottery operator while it is ongoing.

Camelot's legal challenge also comes amid scrutiny about Allwyn boss, Czech billionaire Karel Komárek, and his ties to Russia. Moreover, Camelot was latterly fined £3.15m (\$4.1m) by the Gambling Commission for failures related to the National Lottery mobile app.

GI Verdict: The race for the fourth National Lottery licence was a major talking point for the industry, and it still will be, despite seemingly coming to a close. Both Allwyn and Camelot evidently have their demons, and it's fair to say the powers that be have a difficult decision to make when it comes to finalising the licence.



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ABOUT US

SCCG Management is a consultancy that specializes in sports betting, iGaming, sports marketing, affiliate marketing, technology, intellectual property protection, product commercialization, esports, capital formation, M&A, joint ventures, casino management, and governmental and legal affairs for the casino and iGaming industry.



"We're looking forward to creating education and career opportunities for indigenous communities in North America at GeoComply. These communities make up nearly half of gaming operations in the US and can play a significant role in advancing STEM in those industries."

GeoComply Managing Director of Gaming Lindsay Slader after the group partnered with the American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES) as a way of supporting science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education and employment opportunities for Indigenous peoples of North America and the Pacific Islands

"I am very pleased with our strong results, which illustrate how well we are delivering on our operational and growth plans. Importantly, we have good momentum going into our next fiscal year. We are continuing to invest in content, technology and people that will allow us to deliver profitable growth in line with our goals."

Sportradar CEO Carsten Koerl after the group reported a 41% increase in Q4 2021 revenue

SAN MANUEL APPOINTS FORMER MGM RESORTS EXECUTIVE DANIEL D'ARRIGO AS CFO

The San Manuel Band of Mission Indians has welcomed Daniel D'Arrigo to the tribe, with the former MGM Resorts and Gambling.com Group executive appointed as Chief Financial Officer (CFO).

D'Arrigo has over 30 years of experience in the gambling industry, having previously held roles at Las Vegas Sands and Lady Luck Gaming Corporation (acquired by the now-defunct Isle of Capri Casinos in 2000), before holding five different roles at MGM Resorts over a 23-year period.

On joining San Manuel, D'Arrigo commented: "I am extremely honoured and humbled to be joining the San Manuel enterprise. The tribe has achieved much success while also assembling a top-notch leadership team under Laurens' direction. I look forward to working alongside such experienced colleagues."

During his tenure at MGM Resorts, D'Arrigo joined as Corporate Finance Manager before working his way up the ranks, with titles including Director

of Corporate Finance, Vice President Finance, Senior Vice President Finance and EVP & CFO.

It was during his most recent role at the company that he oversaw the financial aspects of acquiring Mirage Resorts and Mandalay Resort Group.

In February 2019, D'Arrigo opted to take voluntary redundancy at MGM Resorts during a cost-cutting exercise announced by the company.

He continued to work for the company in an advisory role, before joining Gambling.com Group as a Non-Executive Director and Board Member.

Laurens Vosloo, CEO, San Manuel, said: "As Chief Financial Officer, Dan will play a critical role in leading the tribe's fiscal strategy, growth and development."

GI Verdict: With over 30 years' industry experience, D'Arrigo is a shrewd appointment from San Manuel. The veteran will have seen almost everything there is to see in the industry, and will surely help San Manuel going forward.

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MGM Resorts  4%
43.16 USD

Wynn Resorts  3%
81.17 USD

Bally's Corporation  2%
30.03 USD

WORLD SERIES OF POKER LAUNCHES REAL-MONEY ONLINE SERVICE IN MICHIGAN

World Series of Poker has launched its online, real-money service in Michigan, with WSOP.com now live across four US states.

Marking the launch, several introductory offers and bonuses have been made available to new customers.

Players will receive \$50 upon signing up – half available instantly, half available when a first cash deposit is made – while a \$1,000 deposit match scheme has also been implemented.

Ty Stewart, SVP of World Series of Poker, Caesars Entertainment, commented: "With two world champions coming out of this state, Michigan is a special market for the WSOP."

"We're sorry it's taken so long, but WSOP.com is ready to make up for our late entry with promotions, the biggest weekly tournaments and player appreciation benefits like freerolls to the Main Event in Las Vegas."

As a further incentive for budding poker players, \$1,000 is offered to any Michigan

resident who can outlast Joe Cada, the 2009 Main Event champion, at this year's WSOP Main Event in Las Vegas.

Cada has also been appointed as a local ambassador and will host live streaming sessions from WSOP.com, participate in events and host live tournaments across the state.

On the launch in Michigan, Cada said: "It's go time in Michigan. I know a lot of local players are excited WSOP.com is finally live in the state."

Michigan joins Pennsylvania, Nevada and New Jersey as the fourth state where WSOP.com is available to its residents.

GI Verdict: It's another exciting announcement from WSOP, with customers set to take advantage of the offers in huge numbers.

With two world champions, Michigan is clearly a special state for WSOP. And, with all the added incentives, that should provide enough motivation for customers to take part in upcoming events.

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AFRICA BULLETIN: 888 TO LAUNCH AFRICAN JOINT VENTURE

888 Holdings has signed an agreement with five other industry specialists to form a joint venture titled 888Africa; this new organisation will operate 888 brands in regulated online betting and gaming markets within Africa.

888 has invested a minority stake in 888Africa but retains the option of increasing this and could ultimately own up to 100% of the company.

Within the agreement, 888Africa will pay a brand licence fee that will allow the use and operation of 888's online betting and gaming brands within regulated markets in Africa. The content will be offered via a third-party technology platform, with products and games designed for local preference within the African market.

This new venture will be led by industry professionals such as Christopher Coyne, former Chief Marketing Officer and Chief Customer Officer at The Stars Group, Andrew Lee, former MD for Sportsbook of The Stars Group and current Chairman of Voxbet. Also involved are Alex

Rutherford, former Chief Product Officer at Editec Online, Ian Marmion, former Sportsbook Trading Director at The Stars Group and Helen Scott-Allen, former CFO of Premier Bet.

"Given the different regulations at play throughout the continent. But the new brand is a significant statement of intent for the operator's African ambitions"

As an initial step, and subject to licensing, 888Africa hopes to launch in four markets during 2022.

Itai Pazner, 888 Holdings CEO, commented: "We are very excited to

establish 888Africa alongside such an impressive roster of industry talent. The new JV will launch 888's world-class online betting and gaming brands to millions of new customers in the exciting and fast-growing African online market. The structure of this deal enables the group to invest in a strong business with high growth ambitions, without distracting focus from our core business and key strategic markets."

GI Verdict: 888's move into the African market follows a string of other planned market entries. This includes an entry into Ontario's newly regulated sports betting market, which is due to go live in April. Owning a temporary stake under the brand name 888Africa, the move will see the operator venture into largely disparate markets across Africa's different nations. It remains unclear how unified 888's new brand can stay, given the different regulations at play throughout the continent. But the new brand is a significant statement of intent for the operator's African ambitions.



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AFRICA BULLETIN: HONORÉ GAMING EXTENDS PMU PARTNERSHIP, ENTERING SENEGAL MARKET FOR FIRST TIME

Sportsbook platform and technology provider Honoré has extended its partnership with operator PMU and entered the Senegal market for the first time.

PMU is collaborating with the Senegalese National Lottery, Lonase, to allow bettors in the country to wager on the same horse races and with the same potential winnings as PMU customers in France.

Honoré will be providing the platform and sportsbook from which the bets can be placed.

As a company, Honoré is a specialist provider of turnkey sportsbook solutions for operators targeting French-speaking countries within Africa.

Working across multiple channels, it covers both retail and online, and its platform is also fully customisable so operators can ensure the needs of their differing customers are met.

Christophe Casanova, Honoré Gaming COO, said: "We are delighted to be

extending our existing partnership with PMU to facilitate its agreement with Lonase and to allow bettors in Senegal to wager on the same races and with the same payouts as PMU's players in France.

"The move represents a bid from the French provider to expand its services to other French-speaking countries. It's all systems go for the industry in Africa"

"Africa is one of the fastest-growing online betting markets in the world and we have helped operators enter French-speaking markets, and quickly establish their brands by delivering a superior player experience. Now we

can do this with PMU in Senegal in partnership with Lonase."

There has been much movement since the newly regulated African gambling market came into play. Most recently there was BetConstruct's What's Yours is Yours campaign, which looks to develop ways of diversifying potential partnership opportunities.

The philosophy behind the motto being that total freedom of choice and freedom of operation should be given to local operators.

GI Verdict: The platform and technology provider Honoré follows 888 Holdings into the African market by establishing itself in Senegal. Its move, in partnership with PMU, is of particular significance given PMU's collaborative role with the Senegalese National Lottery. The move represents a bid from the French provider to expand its services to other French-speaking countries. It's all systems go for the industry in Africa right now.

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LAS VEGAS: REVENUE, VISITATION RISES

The Las Vegas Strip saw revenues rise 71.94% to \$599.131m year-over-year in February, driving overall state revenue up 44.10% to \$1.113bn.

February's results marked 12 straight months of plus-\$1bn gaming revenue.

South Lake Tahoe was the sole outlier, where revenue declined 3.93% year-over-year.

Sports betting handle increased 40.98% to \$780.833m.

Visitation jumped 69.9% year-over-year to 2.617m in February, but that was still 18% lower than February 2019.

Convention attendance continues to recover year-over-year significantly but remained 41.4% lower than pre-Covid levels.

RevPAR and room rates are also returning to pre-Covid levels, with RevPAR falling just 8.4% from 2019 and room rates 15% higher than 2019.

Of the states that have reported gaming revenues so far, the total has risen 35.56% to \$4.5bn in February and 33.78% to \$9.190bn year-to-date.

SPORTS BETTING	FEBRUARY REVENUE (M)	CHANGE (%) YEAR-ON-YEAR	YEAR-TO-DATE	YEAR-TO-DATE
Land-based	\$3.797bn	+34.22	\$7.565bn	+ 29.93
Sports betting	\$318.521	+44.01	\$731.329	+ 57.43
iGaming	\$376.247	+133.61	\$758.372	+ 61.35



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ALL-SOURCES REVENUE	FEBRUARY REVENUE (M)	CHANGE (%) YEAR-ON-YEAR
Nevada	\$1.113bn	+44.10
Las Vegas Strip	\$599.131	+71.94
Clark County	\$949.870	+50.38
Downtown LV	\$69.182	+33.91
North LV	\$22.848	+18.56
Laughlin	\$43.040	+31.16
Boulder Strip	\$72.773	+14.12
Mesquite	\$15.504	+21.33
Balance of County	\$127.390	+23.81
Las Vegas Locals Market	\$223.012	+19.94
Washoe County	\$83.587	+18.62
Reno	\$60.895	+22.13
Sparks	\$12.807	+7.78
North Lake Tahoe	\$2.156	+4.15
Balance of County	\$7.730	+16.11
South Lake Tahoe	\$19.673	-3.93
Elko County	\$31.763	+25.20
Wendover	\$21.460	+23.08
Balance of County	\$10.303	+29.85
Carson Valley Area	\$10.960	+17.17
Other Areas	\$17.295	+13.84

STRIP COMPONENTS, MAJOR STRIP SEGMENTS:

MAJOR STRIP SEGMENTS:	FEBRUARY REVENUE (M)	CHANGE (%) YEAR-ON-YEAR	WIN % 2022	2021
Blackjack	\$88.783	+100.51	14.55	11.77
Baccarat	\$62.100	+27.65	10.99	11.63
Total Games	\$262.607	+64.47	12.42	12.33
Total Slots	\$336.524	+78.26	7.78	7.33

TABLE DROP	2022	2021	% CHANGE
Blackjack	\$610.192	\$376.194	+62.20
Baccarat	\$565.059	\$418.315	+35.08
Total Games	\$2.114bn	\$1.295bn	+63.27
Slots	\$4.326bn	\$2.575bn	+67.95

RACEBOOK AND SPORTS POOL

NEVADA	FEBRUARY REVENUE (M)	CHANGE (%) YEAR-ON-YEAR	WIN % 2022	2021
Race Book	\$2.602	+13.72	16.49	18.19
Total Sports Book	\$30.921	-2.90	3.96	5.75
Sports Book Handle	\$780.83	+40.98	N/A	N/A

LAS VEGAS	FEBRUARY REVENUE (M)	CHANGE (%) VS FEBRUARY 2021	CHANGE (%) VS FEBRUARY 2019
Visitor volume	\$2.617	+69.9	-18.0
Room inventory	150,702	+3.7	+1.7
Occupancy	69.3%	+27.3	-17.7
Las Vegas hotel rates	\$149.52	+52.5	+15.0
Strip hotel rates	\$159.20	+53.0	+13.7
Downtown hotel rates	\$89.24	+20.2	+29.0
Strip RevPAR	\$113.03	+161.8	+8.6
Downtown RevPAR	\$54.88	+99.3	-7.4
Convention attendance	439,000	+2,286.0	-41.4
Air passengers	3,344	+107.1	-7.9
Daily major hwy. traffic	120,476	+11.3	+16.0
Traffic I-15 at CA line	41,981	+8.1	+12.3
LAUGHLIN			
Visitor volume	93,300	+4.7	-34.1
Room inventory	8,635	flat	-11.5
Occupancy	48.3%	+2.2	-14.8
Average hotel rate	\$52.29	-12.2	+24.1
RevPAR	\$25.26	-8.0	-5.0
Air passengers	12,239	+85.2	-42.7
Hwy. traffic at NV	4,581	-1.9	+0.6

GUEST INTERVIEW



MARTIN DACHSELT,
CEO, BAYES ESPORTS

Dachzelt has long been a proponent of legitimising esports data, as well as promoting its impact on the betting industry. Below, he speaks to Gambling Insider about those very topics

Hi Martin. What are some of the factors that make Bayes

Esports' data official and separates you from the rest of the sector?

If we look at traditional sports and the gathering of traditional sports data, most of the data is scouted. This means there are scouts with the mobile app in the stadium. Data from these sources is non-official data for traditional sports.

For esports, when things got started, the situation was similar. The esports data was not scouted traditionally, but it was scraped from Twitch broadcasts and YouTube. This is not optimal in esports as there is a lot of information that is not visible. Esports is very fast; a lot of the information is delivered at speed so scouts have to guessimate. Esports minimaps are too small, inaccurate and there can be connection breaks and interruptions from commentators, etc. We were the first provider to try and make data official, to try and contract esports data with operators, tournament organisers and game publishers.

Making data official allows a game publisher to have faster and more precise data. What makes our data official is by using an API, some publishers use their own API which exposes data for us to make official. If they don't do this, we help the publisher to create an API, or we code special passes which extract API directly from the game server. What this means, ultimately, is that we have very fast and very precise access to all the data available in a publisher's game. So this is a huge advantage for official esports data, especially when looking at the betting industry. What many people still don't know is that for competitive integrity reasons, broadcasts on Twitch and YouTube are delayed. This delay can range from 45

seconds up to 10 minutes. But if you look at esports, this is entirely necessary. Vision is a big part of the game strategy, so the other team does not see every aspect of the enemy team. This has happened in the past and is why all tournament organisers have introduced sporting integrity delays. We get the data underlaid, so we can deliver it to our partners in a risk-free way.

There is a drawback when it comes to betting, though. When the data is underlaid, the end-user, who is watching Twitch for example, will see the delayed stream with updated odds. So, this might lead to confusion if they're betting. There are products we are developing with our partners to work around this, such as introducing a realisation scoreboard that is ahead of the broadcast.

One of your partners is ESL who was recently acquired by the Saudi Investment Fund. Does this merger change the relationship between you in any way, or the wider landscape of tournament holders?

On the one side, it opens new markets, especially in Saudi Arabia. It means that a lot of money is now getting funnelled into esports, which is good too. This helps to further professionalise esports and related tournaments. There will likely be better outcomes for teams and players also. If you look at ESL specifically, which was already on a professional level, it will get even more professional now. This is all very good for the esports ecosystem.

I think the bigger effect that a lot of people didn't get is that the Saudi Investment Fund acquired Facelt, too, at the same time. While ESL was already the heavyweight in the esports arena, now that they have merged with Facelt and its tech platform (through the Saudi Investment Fund), it will be an even more dominant tournament provider for esports. I think there are some good aspects to this, as the esports tournament scene is still very fragmented.

It can be compared with boxing in a way, where there are multiple divisions with multiple champions. The same can be said for esports, where it's hard to know the best team. They compete in different areas with different regions and tournament rules.

But I think audiences like a clear, definitive winner; a clear world champion. Maybe the Saudi acquisition of ESL and Facelt will create such a gravity, so the ESL becomes the de facto official tournament provider.

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Several other mergers are happening in the industry. What do you make of the trend we're seeing, where many mergers and acquisitions are happening across this market?

All these mergers are very different kinds of mergers. What we are seeing in the gambling industry, for example, is that Kambi has acquired Abios. We have seen Entain acquire Unikrn, too. So, that's a clear sign from the iGaming and betting industry, that they understand the current and future value of esports. Esports is becoming a very important topic for the future, that's showing no signs of going away. A lot of traditional operators do not have a lot of knowledge when it comes to esports, so now they are trying to acquire that knowledge and insight; one way they are doing this is by acquiring companies. This could turn out to be a good long-term strategy, but at the very least it reduces time to market.

In general, the esports industry is fast becoming a booming industry. It's an industry where the business model is still in development. Existing operators are still experimenting with the best ways to enter this market. Of course, there are always going to be start-ups that bring some awesome new technology to the table, but most don't have a strong underlying business model. Or they are not able to execute their business model because of a lack of finances. So, technology acquisitions will run on and continue for some years, until we have a more settled industry like the traditional sports betting industry is today.

Regulations for live streaming are constantly evolving regarding live streaming services such as Twitch. How important are streaming services to the esports sector?

We all know in esports there is a lot of toxicity and damaging behaviours between players. It is a problem, it even creates similar traits in others if they're framed, so toxicity breeds toxicity. This is also not good; worse in a way. So I appreciate everything that the game publishers are doing in this area of responsible, respectful gameplay. This isn't to say that I'm a fan of a completely regulated, clean gameplay environment where players cannot make a joke with one another. However, on the other side, it needs to be seen as friendly and progressive, being a new emerging market.

Casino operators are complaining at the minute because they stage esports events that attract a lot of fans, but they do not spend a lot of money. One very experienced casino manager said to me, "they do not spend a lot now... But in 10 years, esports gamers will come back with their families." This is so true. Esports promotes itself to a young demographic. A dad will come back with his son to go to a world championship in Las Vegas. So the generational evolution of the casino space needs to pursue esports. Las Vegas is building for the next generation and promoting a family aspect to its appeal. Making esports family-friendly will draw other family members to other facets of a business; it's a long-term strategy in play right now.

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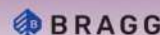
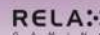
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