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The independent magazine for the bookmaking industry

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**GAMBLING COMMISSION
GEORGE YATES BOOKMAKERS
REPORTS FROM THE BOOKMAKERS' TRADE FAIR**

Picture: Mary Pitt

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Betting shop staff take the Back your Local Bookie petition which gathered over 1 million signatures from customers to 10 Downing Street



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Cover Picture:
The Qipco Champion Stakes finish:
Noble Mission and Al Kazeem
Picture: Mary Pitt

I THINK WE all know what the big story is.

The fact that on November 5 the British Horseracing Authority chose Nick Rust, formerly of Ladbrokes — someone from the bookmaking industry; a career bookmaker, in fact — to be its next chief executive.

Well, who'da thunk it?

Is this finally an acknowledgement that racing is indeed a betting medium? Does it herald a new era of cooperation that stands to benefit both betting shops and racing?

Nick, 47, has spent his entire 27-year career in bookmaking, beginning at Ladbrokes then moving on to become managing director of Skybet, director of betting and gaming for B Sky B, and MD of retail and online at Coral before coming back to Ladbrokes to serve as MD of its retail operation. He is also a racehorse owner.

BHA chairman Steve Harman was quoted as saying: "He has a perspective about racing's finances which is very healthy and refreshing," adding that he understands racing's "growth potential".

He continued: "There's lots of evidence racing and bookmakers are working more together...I think Nick's appointment will help that even further, but that is not the main reason why he was appointed."

Steve Dennis in the November 6 Racing Post pretty well summed it up when he said that the BHA have hired a competent businessman and administrator who they think can address all the current issues facing the industry.

I can only add that most organisations, be they business or government led, work best by not rocking the boat too much, or all at once, but instead by implementing gradual but sustained changes and modifications that will have a long-lasting, but not earth-shattering, impact.

Nick is unlikely to act as a game changer, but instead more of a game evolver. And, as we have seen under Paul Bittar's stewardship, the game is already evolving. It can only be hoped that Nick Rust will continue the work that Paul started in bringing the bookmaking and racing worlds closer together.

SIGNS OF CONTINUED cooperation include the agreement of the 2015-16 levy scheme six weeks ahead of deadline on September 18. In general terms it is a rollover of the present scheme, which is expected to yield £74.6 million. The 54th levy is expected to be on par with that, at £74.3 million.

Also, there will be a continuation of the agreement from William Hill, Ladbrokes, Coral and Betfred of a guaranteed combined levy contribution of no less than £47.5 million.

The one main change will be that shops with gross profits on British racing of less than £60,000 a year will receive a rebate of £1,100 for the first 30 shops in a chain and £500 for all remaining shops with gross profits under that figure. Currently, the rebate is £758 for the first 30 shops in any chain and £191 for the remainder.

ON SEPTEMBER 19, the day after the levy agreement was announced, an article appeared in the Racing Post which may prove prescient. It concerned Ladbrokes' continuing sponsorship of the St Leger. In it, Nick Rust was quoted as saying: "We see Ladbrokes' St Leger sponsorship as part of a potential template for the way in which betting operators and commercial organisations within British racing can work together for the long term."

He went on to say that all sponsorships would now be considered as part of a "wider framework of our spending", to include levy, media rights and data rights payments.

Will this 'bundling' of payments from bookmakers to racing be the wave of the future? Time will tell.

Mary Pitt



Christopher Hudson of George Yates- fourth generation bookmaker

by Chris Pitt

Yorkshire bookmaker Christopher Hudson pulls out a scrapbook and points to a photograph of his grandfather, George Yates Junior, displaying on his board prices for the Premiership – back in the days when the word ‘Premiership’ had a very different connotation to that of today.

It was 1963 and this was about the leadership battle for the Conservative Party, about who would succeed Harold Macmillan as Prime Minister following his resignation through ill health. Of the two main protagonists, Lord Hailsham was 5/4 but ‘Rab’ Butler was a shade of odds-on at 5/6; Sir Alec Douglas-Home, the eventual winner, was 4/1 with Reginald Maudling at 10s and 33-1 bar.

Then he pulls out another photo of his grandfather, this time accepting a bet from American comedian Phil Silvers, best known for his 1950s sitcom role as Sergeant Bilko.

“My grandfather was a prominent Tattersalls bookmaker from pre-war until he died in 1977,” says Chris. “He was a very stylish man, public school and Cambridge educated. He was always impeccably dressed with a Crombie coat and always wore a hat.”

His list of clients included leading trainers Geoffrey Barling, Verly Bewicke and Neville Crump; prominent members of the nobility such as Lord Grimthorpe, the Duchess of Norfolk and the Earl of Rosebery, along with professional punter Alex Bird and Timeform’s founder Phil Bull.

Being the flamboyant persona that he was, after betting at Goodwood during the week, back when Goodwood was a four-day Tuesday to Friday fixture, he’d think nothing of flying over to Le Touquet in northern France for the weekend.

“He was an incredibly successful bookmaker, a phenomenal player,” continues Chris, “more successful even than his father.”

That father, Chris’s great-grandfather, was George Yates Senior, the man who

founded the business that today still bears his name.

“My great-grandfather was a bookmaker just after the Great War. He had pitches all over the country. There were very few bookmakers prepared to lay bets of the size my great-grandfather took.

“I recall very little about him because he died when I was only two years old but I know he was always perceived as a gentleman bookmaker. He was a rails bookmaker with some very wealthy clients and was the senior pitch-holder at most of the northern racecourses. He became a great friend of Jack Swift of Piccadilly.

“He was passionate about the business and formed the Northern Bookmakers’ Protection Association in 1923.

“He had a huge family including five sons, all of whom became bookmakers. At one time there was George Yates Senior on the rails, George Yates Junior in Tattersalls and another son, Harry Yates, in the Silver Ring. Harry was even more flamboyant than my grandfather. My grandfather used to have a Bentley at that time whereas Harry used to drive a purple Rolls Royce!”

George Yates Senior was among the greatest of what we’d today refer to as ‘networkers’, being chairman of the Victoria Club in London, and sitting on the committees of both Tattersalls Committee and the Northern BPA. He also founded the Victoria Club’s northern branch at Briggate in Leeds.

He ran a credit betting shop in the Victoria Club, which doubled as the Northern BPA’s headquarters. Meanwhile, George Yates Junior had similar outlets in Upper Mill Street, close to Leeds railway station, plus a suburban office in Sheppards Lane, Harehills and one in Boston Spa.

Their small chain of George Yates betting shops, which had operated illegally since just after the war were able to trade legally from 1961.

While the two George Yates, Senior and Junior, bore the same name, they had very different styles of operation.

“Although George Yates Junior was public school educated and went to Cambridge University he felt that looking after other bookmakers’ interests was best served by keeping race gangs off the



Christopher Hudson

Picture: Mary Pitt

racecourses,” says Chris. “He, being 6 feet 2 inches and very well built, would often take the law into his own hands to keep bookmakers from being threatened. He had his own people and sometimes used to show the scars on his arms where he’d been knifed.

“My mother was the only daughter of George Yates Junior. My father, Peter Hudson, went to work for him and he duly became a director of the Northern BPA, so anything my grandfather needed to put forward he was able to do it through his son-in-law.”

Northern Bookmakers’ Protection Association literature for 1962 shows George Yates Senior and Harry Yates as honorary vice presidents, with Peter Hudson being included in the list of directors.

“My parents divorced when I was quite young,” recalls Chris, now 54. The majority of my life was spent with my



George Yates Sr, the company's founder

Picture: Supplied

grandfather. He brought me up as his son and I was very close to him.

"After my mother and father split up, my grandfather didn't have the time to devote to the shops – he was more interested in the racecourse – so he sold them to Jim Windsor in 1968, who subsequently sold them to William Hill in the early 70s.

"My father opened a betting shop in

Keighley – he also bet at Elland Road dogs for a short period of time – and he remained a director of the NBPA.

"Unfortunately, my grandfather got old quite quickly after my mother and father divorced. It caused him a lot of stress but he continued to work on the racecourse (albeit less days and venues) until he died, aged 73, in 1977. He suffered a massive stroke at York in October that year."



Comedian Phil Silvers places a bet with George Yates Jr

Picture: Supplied

Chris's grandfather had taken him to his first day's racing at York, aged 12 in 1972, on the day Brigadier Gerard suffered the only defeat of his career, at the hands of Derby winner Roberto in the Benson and Hedges Gold Cup – now the Juddmonte International.

He made his bookmaking debut on the downs at Epsom and then, being at the foot of a long waiting list for racecourse pitches, became a point-to-point bookmaker, beginning at courses in the south of England and the Midlands.

His first 'proper' meeting before the buying and selling of pitches came in was at Aintree by the Canal Turn, now closed, in 1989, Little Polveir's year. When the NJPC took over he bought a couple of pitches and gradually increased the number.

He now bets at Ayr, Newcastle, Cartmel, Aintree, Epsom, Market Rasen, Pontefract, York and Doncaster, and is in the process of acquiring a pitch at Thirsk. And he still does point-to-points, venturing as far south as the Vale of Aylesbury's Easter Saturday meeting at Kimble.

Altogether he spends approximately 40 days on the racecourse; however, an ongoing knee problem makes it difficult for him to bet on consecutive days if having to stand.

He acknowledges that racecourse betting today is exchange-led. "It's all too easy to take a fraction profit; it stops you thinking," he says.

"Whereas in the olden days a bookmaker used to take a bet, issue a ticket, calculate the bet and return it to the clerk, now the person on the front is a supernumerary. My wife and a colleague now take the bets and I run the book from a computer at the back of the pitch."

He has maintained his family's involvement in the Northern BPA, of which he is treasurer and company secretary and has been on the board since 2009. He deals with finances, bookmaker activity and administration, his duties including discussions on rearrangement of pitches and regular visits to the Gambling Commission. With 191 members, the Northern BPA is the biggest bookmakers' trade body in the country. It's a professionally run organisation guided by a 12-strong committee.

Chris holds a trenchant view that those who sit on bookmakers' committees should be fully transparent and disclose all their salaries and benefits, which is what the NBPA accounts clearly show.

When asked to nominate a bookmaker he most admired, he cites the late Ted Sturman, who bet as Fred Binns. "He was a very good bookmaker," he recalls. "He'd study a race and quite often decide not to bet on it if he didn't fancy it.

"My grandfather always had great respect for John Joyce," he adds. "I think he had a sneaking regard for the fact that he used to go to church before he went to the races!"

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Big Mac in America!



by Graham
Sharpe

YOU KNOW you're in America when the chap in the hotel room next to the one you're occupying decides to start drilling through his room safe at midnight because he has to leave soon, but has been unable to open it by the more conventional method of using the code number previously inputted.

Of course, back in the day when technologically unsophisticated dinosaurs roamed the earth he'd have been able to use something known at the time as a 'key'.

He seemed a little put out when I suggested that he might perhaps wait at least until dawn before carrying out such a task, indicating such displeasure by endeavouring to smash my door down with said drill whilst indicating his opinion of me in words at whose meaning I could only guess but which did not seem to suggest we could build a long and rewarding relationship.

Anyway, I survived the encounter and did not allow it to affect my enjoyment of the Breeders' Cup extravaganza I'd come to see.

There was a small diversion before heading to the races when we were driven off to see the delights of Santa Monica, a place I recall hearing about from a record by either Shania Twain or that other one, what's her name - Sheryl Crow? I'm not sure which of them it is but I can only surmise neither of them has ever travelled much or been to the British seaside. Fair enough, the beach is nice enough, and we enjoyed a pleasant early lunch at a welcoming hostelry on the prom - but the pier was something of a let down - not a patch on Brighton, let alone Southend - and I was told that the (in)famous Muscle Beach seemed to have had sand kicked in its face.

As for Hollywood - I apparently had a lucky escape by not going there if the

reports from those who did are anything to go by - they arrived back traumatised and declaring they had no intention ever of returning after being pestered and harassed on all sides.

No, I was otherwise engaged in Pasadena, tracking down vinyl and duly emerging with some real gems - as well as Tiny Tim's debut album, just the cover of which, let alone the sound of his voice, duly re-traumatised the Hollywood set.

I can fully recommend the experience of getting up bright and early - preferably without an alarm call from a drilling neighbour - and heading for Santa Anita racecourse's Clockers' Corner to experience the atmosphere and excitement as the horses go out to work in the pre-dawn gloom, just before the first streaks of early morning sunlight begin to flood across the romantic mountain backdrop, illuminating the art deco style grandstand and revealing not only the hearty breakfast laid on for everyone, but also the presence of John McCrerrick.

Big Mac is clearly at ease with the world, studying the racing papers and greeting the many - very many - British racegoers eager to shake his hand, have their photograph taken with him and chat about Newcastle's sudden improved form. Mac plays the role expected of him, chatting up the female fans and good-naturedly ordering his other half, Jenny, aka The Booby, to cater to his every whim.

It is good to see this icon of the racing and gambling worlds and we chat for a while, me happy to notice that Mac is far more in demand than one or two of his erstwhile Channel 4 Racing colleagues who go about their business untroubled by the attentions of the far from home Brits.

Also on hand and clearly in a good mood, is Frankie Dettori. One of my travelling companions, Karen, returns from a stroll around, excited to show us a photo of herself and he of the Magnificent 7, both sporting wide grins.

Only a couple of weeks earlier I had been regaled at the Arc by another racing fan complaining that she had been completely blanked when she tried to strike up a conversation with the Italian, and vowing that she'd never back another horse that he was riding.

I take the hint and decide Frankie is clearly in such an optimistic frame of mind that he must be anticipating a successful meeting - and sure enough Hootenany at 6/1 duly obliges on day one. My nap of the meeting, Goldcents, also dots up, and I end the day well ahead.

Inevitably, day two produced a dreadful, to my ears, tuneless, version of 'America The Beautiful' sung by some local caterwauling celebrity of whom I had never heard and, of course, the usual tale

of woe as the previous day's winnings were squandered.

I took the opportunity afforded by our very pleasant waitress, when she requested: "Let me know when you wanna kick it up a notch after the coffee". So I decided to drown my sorrows by quaffing a glass of 14 Hands Chardonnay - the 'preferred wine of Breeders' Cup' which, I learned, is thus named as "the inspiration for 14 Hands wines recalls a time when wild horses - measuring a scant fourteen hands high - once freely roamed the hills of eastern Washington state."

Whatever.

The day ended in exciting style as the gallant Toast Of New York, partnered by imminently retiring Jamie Spencer, very nearly compensated trainer Jamie Osborne for the flashbacks he still no doubt suffers when he thinks back to the whack he once received during his riding days from an angry Jenny Pitman, by winning the \$5m Breeders' Cup Classic.

They were beaten in a desperately close photo finish by Bayern, while local hero California Chrome finished third.

There was a crescendo of boos from the home racegoers who, to a (wo)man, seemed to have backed the third, and a stewards enquiry was announced - sparked by the manoeuvre from the stalls which saw Bayern's jockey, drawn in seven, turn his horse sharp left to head for the rails, not appearing to be too worried about the evasive action the other horses and riders were thus forced to take.

Eventually the placings remained unaltered, but there was a definite feeling about that had California Chrome finished runner-up, the Bob Baffert-trained winner might well have been disqualified.

The victory must have put Mr Baffert's mind at rest after he was reportedly spooked by a visiting trainer who had reportedly decorated his own quarters with voodoo-type dolls of his rival handlers, including Mr B.

I was a little spooked myself upon returning home when I found on my office desk a letter from Ontario, Canada, on which, under a heading entitled: 'Itemized List of Contents and Country Origin Manufacture' and dated October 31, appeared the hand-written word: 'Plague'.

Well, would YOU have opened it?

THE WILLIAM HILL 'press team' recently defeated other shortlisted companies, EDF Energy, Nationwide Building Society, The London Eye, UKTV and Virgin Atlantic to win the 'In-House Team of the Year: Private Sector' category at the 2014 Public Relations Consultants Association awards. The team members were: Rupert Adams, Joe Crilly, Jon Ivan Duke, Tony Kenny, Romaine Snijder, Kate Miller and Graham Sharpe. ■

UNDERSTANDING FEES

In the fifth of a series of features on the Gambling Commission Chris Pitt looks at its fee structuring

The thorny subject of Gambling Commission fees and bandings reared its head at this year's Bookmakers' Trade Fair when Philip Davies, MP for Shipley, responded to a question on the perceived inequality of fees paid by small independents compared to the large multiples, stating that while there was "an argument for saying there should be a difference; there isn't an argument for saying the difference should be so high".

Acknowledging the Gambling Commission's argument that there were savings to be made when dealing with economies of scale, Davies pointed out that when the Select Committee had carried out an enquiry into gambling, it had recommended that that discrepancy should be narrowed.

"But all we can do is make recommendations," he concluded. "It's not our decision to take."

The gambling industry is a complex one, with many different types of businesses covering a wide variety of gambling activities. This being the case, there are no easy solutions to the process of setting fee structures.

"The challenge we've always had is to recover the costs of regulation in a way that is as fair as possible," says the Gambling Commission's Director, Regulatory Risk and Analysis, Matthew Hill.

"The system we've adopted from the outset has been to place operators into categories and bands depending on the type of activity and, broadly speaking, the scale of the operation.

"In setting the bands we try to reflect that there are economies of scale in regulating particular betting operators with large numbers of premises. In order to obtain the right balance between simplicity and fairness on fee structure we have to draw the bands in a particular place.

"It is obviously the case in any system that has bands that people, when they approach those bands, may feel hard done by because if they are going to expand they find themselves entering the next band and that can sometimes be a bit of a

hike.

"Looking at things from the other perspective, if we attempted to set the fees to run more linearly, you would end up with many more bands and a huge amount more complexity and, actually, everybody would end up paying more. We are trying to trade off simplicity against keeping the costs down for everybody."

In October last year John Heaton, chairman of 59-shop chain Scotbet, expressed his anger at what he called the "arbitrary graduations" for Gambling Commission fees. He pointed out that the fee for 16-50 shops was £18,000 but "one more shop, when you reach 50, costs you another £27,000". He argued that "such artificial jumps beggar belief and are anti-competitive".

The structure now has six bands, having increased from its original four, and Matthew reiterates that the more bands that exist, the potentially more complex it becomes.

"If people want greater graduation it will come at a cost of greater complexity and probably increased costs overall because you're administering a more complicated system.

"It is also worth bearing in mind that, when focusing on the issues people have when they're approaching the boundaries, what they miss is that once they get into that next band, they can go a long way in expanding their business within that band without incurring any additional costs before reaching the next one.

"We do periodically hold an in-depth review of fees and how they are set. We try as far as possible to minimise the impact of boundary effects. We look at individual businesses and the sector as a whole and try to draw a boundary in a place that will minimise the impact on individual businesses.

"It's not possible to get a system that works perfectly for everybody, we accept that, particularly when you have 3,500 to 4,000 operators. You will find some who are closer to boundaries than others but, by the same token, there will be many that are just inside the boundary with a huge amount of scope for expansion before triggering the next group category.

"Ultimately – and this is the point we've made to many in the industry over a period of years – it is perfectly open for an operator to organise their business so they have two licences, so they can take out another licence for additional shops if they want. In some circumstances it can smooth the impact and we know that some operators are doing that."

The BTC's Howard Chisholm has also made his feelings known regarding the Commission's band structure, arguing that

the steep rise in charges between bands is a major disincentive for bookmakers to grow their businesses.

"It's a point Howard made to us very effectively," notes Matthew, "but I go back to what I said: we have to find a way to allocate costs, the costs of regulation among a complex industry with many different types of businesses of different sizes. We genuinely try to find the fairest way we can to reach the point of the least complexity and the least cost and the greatest fairness. Within the complex industry that we've got, some people will do better than others; that's inevitable.

"On a philosophical point, taking a step back from the bands and circumstances of individual operators, society doesn't tolerate unregulated gambling. It will only tolerate regulated gambling. Regulation costs money and the real question is: 'What is the smallest amount of money that can be spent on regulation while still being able to point to it as being credible?' And then, how do you allocate those costs among the people you regulate?"

"We do our best on the basis of our understanding of the industry, about past and future trends, to recoup those costs in the fairest way we can. There will be winners and losers. The trick for us is to get as few winners and losers as possible. And let's not forget Parliament has to approve all our fees – it's not the case that the Gambling Commission simply comes up with a figure and that's the end of it."

Hopes that regulations on overseas operators and a consequent increase in the number of companies obtaining Gambling Commission licences might lead to the regulator's charges being reduced are not wishful thinking but a bit premature, and by no means certain.

"The fact that a lot of remote gambling operators are coming in does not mean that fees will necessarily be reduced as a result," says Matthew. "But as the government made clear during the remote legislation's passage through Parliament, overseas operators will now bear their fair share of Commission costs, such as betting integrity and understanding how best to combat money laundering. And in just the same way that there are economies of scale with a major operator, there are also economies of scale with the Gambling Commission's specialist resources and overheads such as accommodation, IT and the Board, so those cross-cutting costs can be spread across a larger footprint. That is where the scope for reduction in the future might be once remote implementation costs, including, for example, developing a remote self-exclusion scheme, have been met. We'll have a greater number of operators to help



Matthew Hill, Director of Regulatory Risk and Analysis

Picture: Supplied

pay for the work we need to do.”

A common complaint among independent bookmakers is the relative costs of compliance visits compared to those incurred by the major chains. Furthermore, many point out that they have had no such visits for some time and query what their money is being spent on.

Matthew responds: “The money is being spent on, for example, the systems that have been put in place to combat betting fraud; it’s being spent on the work we’re doing to advise Government on a successful way forward on high stake B2 machines, which of course constitute an important part of the revenue for a whole range of bookmakers. We try to allocate the costs of that across the industry fairly so the whole industry benefits.

“All of that work – work that we hope goes towards building public confidence in the gambling industry – is a huge part of what we do. Shop compliance visits have now become a relatively small part of our work. We’ve reduced the amount of direct inspections that take place, particularly the smaller operators.

“What it comes down to, to put it crudely, is that if we are inspecting a business with one shop, we are effectively doing a headquarters visit for a one-shop business. When we inspect a major operator, we don’t do 2,000 individual visits.

“Also, all of the top five bookmakers are doing extensive test purchasing that they are paying for themselves. It’s a really serious investment which could almost be seen as an additional licence fee. They are doing a lot of things that we wouldn’t expect smaller bookmakers to do themselves, and with all the associated additional costs.

“The fact of the matter is we don’t have to inspect all their shops. We obtain a lot of data from the operators themselves – it’s reasonable to expect a major operator to

perform more of its own regulation. We can also dip sample and we can obtain information from the local authorities and others.”

There is a possibility, however, that a change in the way fees are structured may be in the offing. In general, costs are apportioned according to scale of activity. With the land-based betting sector the deciding factor has been the number of shops.

“We’ve long recognised that as being a relatively crude measure and we have expressed from time to time our ambition to move to something a bit more sophisticated,” says Matthew.

“The obvious answer would be to relate it to gross gambling yield (GGY). In simple terms, stakes less winnings; it’s the immediate profit from betting before payment of costs. It’s the system we use in the remote sector – the fee category for a remote operator is based on GGY. It provides a closer link between the amount of gambling and the fee category.

“Over the course of the next two years we’ll be conducting a fees review and the first stage of that will be a consultation on how the Commission should collect fees. Rather than saying ‘this is what the fees will be’, we’ll be suggesting an alternative basis for collecting the fees. We’re hoping we’ll be able to provide an opportunity for all those people who are concerned about the shop-based system to express their views and help us work up some potential alternatives.

“Moving to a system based on GGY depends on getting really good data from operators, but we’re at a point now where we’re much more confident about the data we’re receiving than we’ve ever been in the past. It may be that the time is right and it’s something on which we want to start consulting.” ■

Manny Cook

POPULAR NORTH-WEST BOOK-MAKER Manny Cook has died aged 78 after losing his battle with cancer. He founded the M Cook Bookmakers chain comprising 17 shops located around Cheshire and Merseyside. The firm is also represented on 14 racecourses.

Manny opened his first shop, in his home town, Ellesmere Port, in May 1966. Soon afterwards he bought a second Ellesmere Port shop, then one in Chester and gradually built up the chain.

A larger than life character, he held strong views on a variety of subjects relating to the legislative side of the industry, notably on the Gambling Commission, the ABB and the way horseracing is funded, and was never afraid to air them. Seminars and conferences at the Betting Show and, latterly, the Bookmakers’ Trade Fair, were invariably platforms at which he made his opinions known to all.

“I’ve always had an aptitude for mathematics,” he said when interviewed for BOS Magazine in 2009. “Where that came from, I don’t know because my education was terrible. The person who taught me was a woman who worked on the bacon counter at the co-op.”

Future industry gatherings will be the sadder with his passing. ■

ABB commits to measures

THE ASSOCIATION OF British Bookmakers has stated it is looking to strengthen player protection controls with the introduction of additional voluntary measures to its promotion of responsible gambling on FOBTs.

The ABB is proposing a number of pre-commitment measures, including an option to limit time and/or spending before commencing play on the machines. ■

New TV ads standards

CORAL, LADBROKES, PADDY Power and William Hill have laid out a series of self-regulating measures aimed at promoting responsible gambling. Among various initiatives that came into effect on October 1, they have subscribed to a voluntary TV advertising ban on sign-up offers before 9pm and created a new body to hold operators to account. ■

Trade Fair reports

MP Philip Davies urges bookmakers to show “a human face”

IN A WELL-ATTENDED session chaired by the Racing Post’s Jim Cremin at the Bookmakers’ Trade Fair, Philip Davies, MP for Shipley, West Yorkshire, and a member of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport’s Select Committee, said the bookmaking industry needed to show “a human face” in order to counter challenges from the government, media and special interest groups.

Philip knows of what he speaks; he grew up with bookmaking as a family business. His mother, trading as Marilyn Davies Bookmakers, had two shops near Doncaster. He used to work weekends and after school in the shop chalking up.

“It was my dad’s thing,” he recalled. “My dad was a teacher and my mum was a civil servant, and at the time, in the 1970’s, you could leave the civil service and be guaranteed to get your job back if you wanted it. So he had my mum set it up with the plan for him to quit teaching and for her to go back to the civil service, but 25 years later he was still teaching and she was still running the betting shop, which she hated, but I loved it,” he said. The shops ended up being sold to Mark Jarvis.

“Because of my background I’ve got a natural sympathy to bookmakers, particularly small independent bookmakers. It might not win many votes, but it’s something that’s important to me.”

Based on his own experience, he commented that in Parliament “you’re faced with with lots of people who pontificate about things and they have absolutely no idea what they’re talking about. Politicians will say what they think is popular, and there aren’t many votes in defending the gambling industry; nobody goes up to you and shakes your hand when you’re walking down the High Street when you speak up for the betting industry.”

He singled out the Campaign for Fairer Gambling for drawing the government’s attention to gambling. Otherwise, he said,



Philip Davies

Picture: Mary Pitt

“nobody would have cared. I’ve knocked on doors for the Conservative party for 25 years. I have not once ever had anyone who raised a concern about any form of gambling with me. They’ll raise immigration and things like that, but they won’t raise gambling.”

He called the impending Point of Consumption Tax “a solution looking for a problem.”

“Everyone knows it has nothing to do with improving regulation; in fact, it will make regulation worse,” he said, adding it would likely have a negative impact on regulation in that some companies will go illegal to avoid paying.

“While it’s perfectly justifiable to do it from a taxation point of view, it’s certainly not justifiable to do it from a regulatory point

of view.”

Long-standing bookmaker George Carrigill raised the issue of the inequality of what small independents pay in Gambling Commission fees compared to the large multiples.

Philip responded: “We addressed this when the Select Committee did an enquiry into gambling, and we actually made a recommendation that that discrepancy should be narrowed. We didn’t go as far as saying it should be exactly the same per shop, and we did accept the Gambling Commission’s argument that there are certain savings to be made when you’re dealing with one company with lots of shops. There’s an argument for saying there should be a difference; there isn’t an argument for saying the difference should be so high,

and I’d certainly like there to be a much smaller gap.”

Philip agreed with George regarding the substantial increase in local authority fees, calling them “unjustifiable”.

Going back to the Gambling Commission, he offered: “They’ve got all sorts of anomalies with their fee structure which are totally unjustifiable, but ultimately it’s their decision to take.”

The Gambling Commission, he explained, operates with the authority of the DCMS. If the Gambling Commission wanted to change the fee structure, the DCMS wouldn’t stand in their way.

“We made recommendations in our reports about what the Gambling Commission should do and what the fee structure should be, but all we can do is make recommendations, it’s not our decision to take.

“The issue is, what fee structure does the Gambling Commission want?”

He went on to say the debate over gambling machines would be coming back into prominence very soon with the upcoming release of research into FOBTs. “Everybody will select from that research the bit that suits their particular argument. The storm hasn’t gone away. I’m not sure the storm will ever go away, certainly not in the near future.”

He predicted the industry could expect another challenge around FOBTs “before the end of the year.

“If Labour win the election, then I would think pretty soon after getting in they will clobber FOBTs again.”

Philip praised the efforts being made by the ABB to increase social responsibility, but he added a caveat:

“The betting industry is never going to get good press; it just isn’t going to happen. The only way the industry is ever going to get its message across is by using its own time and its own resources to do it. I’ve been saying to the betting industry that they need to use their advertising space on TV to promote what they’re doing about responsible gambling, to say we don’t want people to spend what they can’t afford or to spend time that they can’t give betting on machines; this is

Trade Fair reports

what we're doing, these are the time limits we've set in place; this is what we're doing to try to stop people from getting into problems."

He observed: "The industry hunts in a pack, understandably to a certain extent. They sort of feel safety in numbers. I'm not sure that's always wise."

He said that the big bookmakers have become "faceless institutions".

"It's just a corporation that's seen by the public as being as grasping as possible to take as much money off people as they can get.

"They've got to introduce a face. If I was the chief executive of one of the big bookmaking companies, I would be doing an advert on TV saying, 'This is who I am, I'm in charge of this business. Whilst I'm in charge

of this business we don't want to take money off people who can't afford it.

"We want to do everything we can to stop people getting into trouble, and these are the things we're doing in our shops to try and stop people from having a problem".

"You've got to put a face to a company to show that they're human, that they've got their own families, and they wouldn't want their families to get into problems.

"I think the first company that gets out there and does that will have a massive halo effect. I think they would get a lot of support.

"The betting industry needs to raise its game and actually get out there and let people put a face to a name to promote a responsible gambling message.

"The other thing I'd say is that the gambling industry is too fractured. The whole betting industry needs to support each other. There's been too much what I'd call negative campaigning by parts of the gambling industry about other parts of the gambling industry. All you'll end up with is mutual suicide.

"One thing that the betting industry collectively has to do is to support each other and support the principle that if people have money, they should be free to choose how to spend it."

HE THEN ASKED a question which he proceeded to answer himself: "Why is it that nobody cares about problem gambling on the lottery? The reason boils down to that people who are

anti-gambling aren't interested in who's losing the money, or how much money they're losing; they claim they are, but they're not.

"Because the money from the lottery is going to, as they see it, 'good causes', then nobody complains. Nobody cares that somebody's done a load of money because it's going to a good cause. But they do care that somebody's done a load of money and it's going to a bookmaker.

"So the issue is it's not where they money's coming from that matters to these people, it's where the money's going to."

To counter the image of the faceless corporation, he said, "The face of bookmaking shouldn't be William Hill or Coral, it should be small independent bookmakers." ■

ABB and GamCare host seminars

GAMCARE, THE CHARITY providing support for people with gambling addictions, in conjunction with the ABB hosted three taster seminars at the Bookmakers' Trade Fair at Wolverhampton Racecourse ahead of a seminar on social responsibility and interaction training that was being held at Wolverhampton the following day.

The seminars offered a sampling of the free of charge training the ABB offers members relating to the ABB's Code for Responsible Gambling, focussing on recognising and responding to signs of problem gambling.

Trevor David, GamCare's lead training and development consultant, led the sessions.

He began by explaining that problem gambling rarely exists in isolation, that often problem gamblers have other issues going on in their lives and are using gambling as a means of escape.

He noted that most problem gamblers are dealing with some

kind of loss. They may be using gambling as a way to be away from their problem, with some 'alone time'. Gambling can be used as a coping mechanism but it is one which can become harmful. It can become their main means of escape and take over their lives without them realising it.

Gambling should be a fun activity, but some people can start to think of gambling as a way to solve their problems.

Trevor outlined the role of betting shop staff in making interventions to customers who might be on the verge of developing gambling issues. It's important for staff to be alert and to ask themselves: is it problem gambling or anti-social behaviour I'm dealing with?

Staff should be informed about GamCare and what they do so they can pass this information on to their customers who might potentially have an issue, letting them know what's available to them.

Staff safety was touched on - what staff can do within the limits of their job and what they feel comfortable doing. Sometimes it's best to bring in a third person, such as another staff member or a manager to help deal with a situation.

Trevor pointed out there are indicators that help identify problem gambling behaviour, such as the person's emotional and physical state, and how the



GamCare's Trevor David

Picture: Mary Pitt

customer copes with losing. Staff are limited to an extent in that they only know what the customer is like while they're in the shop, they don't see the person in other environments.

It's important to try to build an understanding with the customer before any problems develop and to then choose the right time to talk to them and what to say to them. It's about getting the balance right, using the correct tone and content. Choosing carefully what to say and when. How to let them know what they're doing, bringing them back to reality, so to speak. Customers may not

always be aware of how much time or money they're spending on machines, sometimes they 'zone out'.

Sharing experiences is also helpful, making note of what staff have said in the past, and what has worked for them. Part of the following day's seminar involved going through different scenarios staff might encounter.

Lynda Stewart, a former Ladbrokes manager, suggested positive intervention to try to break the cycle, interacting with a customer before any problems develop. She also mentioned knowing how not to overdo it, when to leave a customer alone, giving the customer space to make their own choice, but letting them know what other choices are available.

Another factor to take into consideration is that shops in different areas might also have different types of customers; some may have mostly regulars, some have more turnover and a steady stream of new customers.

There is more concentration on raising awareness of problem gambling now than there ever has been. The industry is acting collectively to address the issue. More at risk people are being recognised. It's all about early intervention and getting the awareness out there. ■

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Trade Fair reports

BTC and Optima sign MarginMaker agreement

THE BOOKMAKERS TECHNOLOGY Consortium (BTC) chose the Bookmakers' Trade Fair to announce the signing of an agreement for Optima IS to support, maintain and develop BTC's MarginMaker 2 betting and e-gaming platform.

Earlier this year, Optima and GTech announced a deal by which Optima IS acquired rights and business from GTech in order to support current MarginMaker 2 customers and to commercialize and continue the worldwide development of the award winning e-gaming and betting platform.

Jacob L. Curciel, CEO and founder of Optima, said: "We are very excited to work with the members of the Bookmakers Technology Consortium which have demonstrated a vast experience in the bookmaking industry, a clear strategic direction and a direct approach to business in general. The BTC board have explained very interesting plans to us that will be developed during the coming months.

"At Optima we are committed to work hand by hand with them to ensure that all the BTC members will count with the best technologies available in the market to support and power their businesses. We will deliver our innovative and robust first-class products, part of Optima's MM2 and services portfolio, allowing the BTC to compete at the highest level in the challenging UK market, on the retail, web and mobile channels."

BTC director Howard Chisholm commented: "The BTC is committed to the ongoing development of the MarginMaker 2 platform which is undoubtedly the

'Rolls Royce' of EPOS systems for UK and Irish independent bookmakers. We are extremely pleased to have partnered with Optima who have considerable experience managing and developing the MarginMaker 2 platform. The directors are looking forward to working with Optima to enhance the functionality of the system for the benefit of all the members of BTC.

"A major benefit of moving to Optima for supply of the MarginMaker2 software is an immediate reduction in the cost of new installations. We anticipate a significant increase in take up of the BTC services following this announcement." ■

Optima

IN AUGUST, SPAIN-BASED Optima, a B2B supplier of turnkey sports betting and gaming solutions, announced an agreement with GTech to take over licensing, support and development services for a group of existing GTech sports betting and gaming customers on the MarginMaker2 platform. Also under the terms of the agreement, Optima acquired rights from GTech, to support, develop and commercialize the MarginMaker sports betting and gaming services business worldwide.

Optima was created three years ago, during which they've been deeply involved with the development of different systems for various bookmaking and e-gaming companies.

Optima's CEO and founder Jacob L. Curciel was at the company's stand at the Trade Fair to elaborate on the deal with BTC that had been announced that same day.

He said: "We have taken the development of the MarginMaker product, commercializing and supporting it; MM2 is a fully supported product that we'll be constantly improving, bringing product and technology innovation to our partners."

Back in 2007 the BTC expressed the view that MarginMaker was the best EPOS software for independent bookmakers. But what else



Optima's CEO Jacob L. Curciel

Picture: Mary Pitt

was it about MarginMaker that made it such an attractive proposition to Optima?

"Firstly," replied Jacob, "we'd been working on MarginMaker already for a few years. Secondly, MarginMaker is one of the most stable and powerful bookmaking and e-gaming solution in the market.

"Technologically speaking we are heavily investing in the product, making sure MarginMaker incorporates all the latest advances in technology and has all the different services that will help our partners lead the market in the coming years.

"MM2 is already a stable and mature product offering unrivaled features and a very rich roadmap."

"We are developing a new generation of EPOS for MarginMaker. Our proposals are very innovative and are going to enhance the user experience and the products available in the retail and online, both in the UK and overseas.

"We have created the Optima MM2 certified supplier network where service suppliers guarantee that the latest version of their services is always available on our platform for existing and new partners, in a continuous integration programme.

"Some of our existing MM2 users also offer white label and bookmaking managed services to those organisations that want to have all the products available on Optima's platform without running a full MM2 system and concentrating just in the marketing side of the business."

The agreement between Optima and the BTC looks to be a win-win for both companies.

"We are very happy to be working with the BTC," said Jacob. "They have a great roadmap that we're going to develop. They're a very good partner with a lot of penetration in the UK bookmaking industry amalgamating a lot of UK bookmakers.

"In the past it was the case that a lot of independent bookmakers were not getting MarginMaker due to the cost of licenses and setup. Through the agreement with different retail partners, we want the independent bookmakers to have the best range of products available in the market.

"With the optimized financials of MarginMaker, our partners can increase their number of members and can create a stronger offering for the bookmaking industry in the UK." ■

Trade Fair reports

IBAS

BACK IN MAY, IBAS sensibly issued ten tips for avoiding World Cup disputes. It appears to have had the desired result with IBAS' managing director Richard Hayler reporting "our quietest World Cup yet".

The betting industry seemed fully prepared for any idiosyncrasies that might arise and took steps to minimize their effect.

"We were really pleased to see the number of bookmakers who contacted us to tell us about the specific internal initiatives they'd done to prepare their shop staff for the type of ambiguous bets that have arisen in previous World Cups," said Richard.

"Generally speaking, over half of the disputes during the early stages of the World Cup arose from dubious goal awarding decisions, which can affect any football action, and in the latter stages and significantly, the final, it was matches being decided after the 90 minute result.

"That aside, the industry collectively, hopefully with a small amount of help from IBAS, did well to minimize the number of disputes that reached us this time round."

One of the tips issued by

IBAS is sound advice for any new type of bet, not just the World Cup: be careful not to sacrifice clarity at the cost of creativity.

"It's a very competitive betting market and that's great for customers and also good for the industry that people are given their freedom to come up with new offers and promotions," observed Richard.

"There's so much choice out there now but, unfortunately, sometimes we find there is a gap between the traders and marketers who develop the concepts and the compliance staff who might spot the potential pitfalls, so the offer goes to market and ends up in a shop but with key terms, which crucially affect whether a bet is a winner or a loser, omitted or open to debate. Then, by the time it gets back, the bet has been struck, the outcome has been decided and the dispute comes to IBAS if the bookmaker has not been able to find a compromise with the customer.

"Nearly all these cases, probably all of them, could have been avoided if, at the time the promotion was invented, the potential pitfalls had been spotted and clarified. Thankfully, the World Cup didn't deliver many of those

situations at all, which is a credit to the industry."

Last season there was a large number of football disputes caused by bets not clarifying terms of the special mark sense or quick slip coupons.

"There are two types of issue here," noted Richard. "The first is whether quick slips and mark sense work with the till technology to read the bet correctly – there are still teething problems with those. All we can do is urge the companies to make sure that the customers check their receipts to make sure they're getting what they want to get. That avoids disputes further down the line.

"The other issue we've made about mark sense promotions relates to the 'yes or no' coupons where there are six different markets and a customer simply has to answer yes or no to each one. In some of those cases there's potential ambiguity which again could be ironed out by putting the definitions of the market on the coupon.

"The most important thing is to check that each individual element of the 'yes or no' coupon has a defined specific term that makes it a winner or loser and there's no ambiguity in it. The more defined they can be made, the better." ■

SIS



SIS Stand Picture: Mary Pitt

SIS'S STAND – which promoted its SIS FACTS, SIS+ and VBC channels, as well as an improved multiview text system – welcomed many familiar faces and potential new customers at the Trade Fair

Paul Witten, SIS's new commercial director, was among the company's managers who attended the show. The former Ladbrokes and Betfair executive joined SIS from German lottery business Tipp24.

He said: "It was great to be back in the heart of betting and the BOS Trade Fair was an ideal re-introduction to an industry that's starting to fight back after some tough times.

"The show was quite busy and there was a pleasing positive atmosphere around the SIS stand. For me, it was the ideal opportunity to meet our customers as well as other members of the SIS team.

"The new initiatives I'll be promoting at SIS are genuinely exciting and I'm looking forward to continuing conversations with customers regarding these in the future." ■

SMP

TELFORD-BASED SMP SECURITY Solutions were another company making their Bookmakers' Trade Fair debut.

SMP – it stands for Secure Mechanical Products – are safe manufacturers with forty years of experience in the manufacturing of cash safes, secure storage cabinets, jewellery safes, drugs cabinets, deposit safes, underfloor safes, security doors and strongroom doors.

"Our expertise is in bespoke safes," said SMP marketing executive Wendi Beamson. "We supply to many sectors, including retailers, supermarket chains, banks, jewellers, petrol forecourts to name but a few, but we also supply a range of deposit and Eurograde safes to the betting industry."

SMP were showcasing their Community Eurograde 1

deposit safe featuring a time delay lock.

"It will fit under the counter and allow staff to deposit the cash into it," explained Wendi. "It has an internal coffer door and a time delay which can be set so that they are not able to open the safe themselves if they were attacked, so it offers greater protection."

It is a safe that is tailor-made for the independent bookmaker.

SMP began trading in the manufacturing sector in January 1974. While proud to be British, they are also an international firm, exporting safes on a worldwide basis to eighteen countries, most of which are in the European Union, but also including Russia and Taiwan.

In 2013, SMP Security Solutions joined Associated Security Solutions Group, the UK's industry leader for the supply, installation and service of the largest range of



SMP's Community safe

Picture: Mary Pitt

sophisticated security products that are available to fulfil the demands of today's market.

"Both are family-run businesses," said Wendi.

"Because we are one of the few manufacturers of safes in the UK we can supply Associated Security with bespoke security solutions to suit their customer's requirements and SMP benefits from nationwide sales coverage and distributions and service network.

"We offer a 24-hour help line which allows for convenient over the phone assistance or to arrange for an engineer to be with you in four hours from when the call is logged, which allows our large network of highly skilled engineers and skilled craftsmen to be there as and when the need arises, and they can respond very quickly." ■

Inspired

INSPIRED GAMING GROUP arrived at the Bookmakers' Trade Fair having recently signed a deal with Gala Coral Group for the supply of multichannel mobile content, via its Remote Gaming Server (RGS), Virgo.

At the Trade Fair itself Inspired was showcasing new premium HD VLT games and Virtual Sports for the UK LBO industry.

Visitors had the opportunity to use Inspired's new Virtual Sports Bet Management System (BMS), BetBox, which enables any betting, gaming or lottery operator to add a schedule of 24/7 Inspired Virtual Sports and numbers games to their venues.

Inspired presented its latest development to the BetBox Virtual Sports bet management system – a self-service kiosk called BetBuilder. Representatives were on hand to discuss how independents could add virtual content to

their existing SIS subscription via Inspired's Virtual Betting Channel.

Storm is one of the UK's most popular gaming machines for the independent sector and boasts a library of top-performing games. Inspired chose the Trade Fair to present its new titles for 2014, including Wild Dollars, 100-1 Roulette and Dragon Bet roulette, as well as Fortune Spins games such as White Knight and Goddess of the Amazon, which give players more features for their money.

Inspired also showcased how it is leading the charge for providing independents with responsible gambling software. Inspired's Open SBG/VLT Core technology means that new responsible gaming software can be deployed quickly via the network, and operators and regulators can segment data by any criteria, for example by game, machine, player, average stake, or time on device.

Lee Gregory, Inspired's UK managing director, commented: "For us, the Virtual Sports

sector, driven by the growth in virtual football, across all platforms, is a huge opportunity for independents. We are also planning to launch a number of exciting new games and functionalities to drive machine income and growth of the independent sector."

Internationally, Inspired continues to progress, having recently launched its Jungle Bucks game on its Open VLT platform in Italy, and announced its eighth Italian concessionaire live with its Virtual Sports - Intralot Italia. In the last year, Inspired's Virtual Sports products have supported the development of a €1 billion p.a. market in Italy.

Inspired has also signed a long-term contract to provide virtual gaming systems and platforms in the Philippines, repeating previous successes in markets around the world. Inspired's Virtual Gaming Platform and products are now live across 40,000 venues and over 200 web and mobile sites in 35 countries. ■

Buckley's accolade

INSPIRED'S LUCY BUCKLEY has been recognised in Global Gaming Business's "40 under 40" list, which identifies rising stars in the gaming industry who have made a mark during their early careers and could eventually succeed the established leaders.

As an additional accolade, Lucy has been promoted from marketing director to a new role as director of strategy and communications, in recognition for her contribution to the business over the last four years.

Lucy will be working as part of the executive team to refine and document Inspired's corporate and divisional strategies, define key milestones, and track progress towards both short-term and long-term business objectives, as the business expands into new markets and product segments. ■

TDI Image

THE MOST EFFECTIVE area of space in a shop is its shop window display, yet it is something that often goes underutilised.

Manchester-based TDI Image recognises the importance of what signage says about a business. They deal in just about any form of printwork, specializing in high-quality bespoke digital wallpaper, window graphics, banners and poster printing.

"A lot of people don't realise what a sign does," remarked TDI graphic designer Jim Calvert at the company's Trade Fair stand. "It's their projection on the high street. They may have put in a bespoke printed carpet in the shop but that won't bring them business through the door. And that's the main thing, getting people through the door."

TDI began trading with bookmakers in 1998, initially on the shopfitting side before printing became part of their main business.

"The first bookmaker we were involved with was Stanley Racing after legislation

changed allowing window displays in betting shops," recalled Jim. "Prior to that, we'd been working mainly with estate agents and opticians. When we do a shopfit we tend to incorporate a lot of our graphics and print."

As Jim explained, corporate signage makes a statement about your company. "A lot of people think you've got to be a big company to have a corporate signage. You don't. Anyone can have a corporate image because it's the image you project. If you've got three shops, locally you can be as big as any of the major high street brands, because it's making your presence felt.

"Signage," he added, "is a powerful weapon and makes a powerful statement about your business. You're out there in competition and your sign can say a lot. Ironically, a lot of people don't actually look at their own signage. If they stood on the other side of the street and looked at their sign, cold, they'd ask themselves what it says about their business.

"We know of a bookmaker who opened a shop in a new area, nowhere near where he'd been before. He opened under



TDI's Jim Calvert and Andy Croft

Picture: Mary Pitt

his name and a lot of people were asking what he did. The name was well-known in his locality but not 200 miles away in his new location. In that instance it would have been better for the sign to have included the words 'betting shop'. A sign quite literally says a lot about your business."

All of TDI's posters are printed on HP paper using fade resistant UV inks for a longer life. Improvements in technology mean that their poster design service has become very affordable.

"Posters are massively cheaper these days," said Jim. "You can print them onto different types of material that will last different lengths of time; you can print them onto waterproof paper;

there are just that many more things available. And with the new technology with the inks, the colours and the vibrancy last a lot longer than they used to."

Another TDI product, Contra Vision, a perforated window film, allows one-way vision window graphics, ideal for commercial outdoor advertising or transformation of retail windows. It doesn't block sunlight but has anti-glare properties.

TDI believes that there are many ways for a bookmaker to turn their window into a marketing platform without spending a lot of money, meaning that independents can now have the same style of window as the major firms. ■



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MRG SYSTEMS

MRG Systems

MRG SYSTEMS' STAND attracted plenty of attention throughout the day, with visitors keen to view a couple of new products designed to provide betting shop customers with easier access to information: the Manager's Monitor and the All-in-One screen.

And adding an Irish flavour to the Stroud-based screen systems supplier were Barney O'Hare of Bar One Racing and David Byrne of BET Byrne Bookmakers, both of whom use MRG's BIDS5 solution which provides each bureau service with its own distinctive branding.

Heather Glenn, consultant for Bar One Racing's Screen One Bureau Services said of BIDS5: "It's working very well. It's also given us opportunity to add extra markets. It's very dynamic in that you can change things instantly and communicate much better with the customer."

David Byrne added: "The MRG service has been a huge benefit to us. The flexibility allows us to do things that no other system has ever gone

close to, and our customers to have a screen system that suits them. That, I think, is what all the independents need today."

MRG's Ian Hunter explained that the main display screens showed three different versions of the same system to highlight BIDS5's flexibility. He was also keen to promote the company's new products, starting with the Manager's Monitor, which comprises a touchscreen 21-inch slate from HP with templates from MRG's automated screen services.

"The Manager's Monitor provides customers with the same information the manager uses, using the same screen. These screens are perfect, making it easy to share information between counter staff and customers."

The All-in-One (AiO) screen is a large screen split into columns to show a day's racing; it's a digital newspaper for betting shops.

"The All-in-One is proving to be very popular," commented Ian, "particularly in Ireland where it's really taken off. It's a digital newspaper that isn't out of date as soon as it's printed because it's continually being updated with the early prices, runners, non-runners, shows and results; everything that happens during the normal



MRG's Bryan Corbin and Ian Hunter with David Byrne and Barney O'Hare
Picture: Mary Pitt

course of a racing day."

And, he hinted, there is more to come, tantalizingly revealing: "There are all sorts of clever things that we're going to present to our customers to enable them to make the most of those screens. We like to innovate and we strive to provide bookmakers with solutions that make a positive difference in the shops and in the studio."

MRG's Bryan Corbin added: "When you buy into the BIDS5 product you don't just buy a great studio system. There's a bigger package of

solutions available, all of them designed to add to the skillful management and provision of a high quality service. This may include additional audio capability or remote switching of TV channels. Add individual branding into the equation and it becomes a very potent proposition.

"It is our objective to provide independent bookmakers with the tools to compete on an equal footing with top high street brands. We believe clients using the BIDS5 bureau service pay testament to that." ■

Shopworks

TECHNOLOGY PROVIDERS SHOPWORKS were displaying their online automated staffing solution at the Trade Fair.

The web-based platform allows the user to build error-free rotas, run detailed staffing and social responsibility reports and even run the payroll. It allows more effective communication with staff via SMS and can save up to eight per cent on admin costs.

Their bookmaker clients include Paddy Power, Stan James, Jenningsbet and Backhouse Racing, while the Shopworks platform has now been extended into AGC with Talarius and Praesepe and Rank coming on board earlier this year.

Mike Hennessy, Shopworks' business development manager was manning the stand along-

side the firm's client support manager Lynda Stewart.

Mike reported: "Additionally, in the last year we've had Chisholm Bookmakers join us for a trial, and added Don Noble and Ansell, plus BetEssex, who currently have two shops with three more on the way.

"We give up to 60 days' free trial with the platform itself, which gives firms time to set it up, use the programme and see for themselves how they can save up to eight per cent on their admin costs.

"It's an effective way of marketing our product. We're confident that we can help our clients save money; that's why we do it. We don't tie clients down to contracts."

A Shopworks customer survey in 2012 generated 150 responses, with 96 per cent answering that they would recommend Shopworks to others.

"They were the front-end



Shopworks' Lynda Stewart and Mike Hennessy
Picture: Mary Pitt

users we spoke to and it was very positive," said Mike. "We were pleased that they could see the benefits of using the system and that they would recommend it to people who worked elsewhere."

Surveys are by nature a two-way thing and Mike reported that Shopworks have taken steps regarding some of the findings.

"Some of the survey was tailored to individuals' experiences that they had with the portals away from the main platform, on which they could see their rota. They asked for

some additional information so they could see exactly what they were going to get paid, so we added that on to the system."

Having established itself successfully in the bookmaking industry, Shopworks is now looking to get into the retail and the hospitality markets.

Commented Mike: "They are both very competitive areas – bookmakers are much more of a niche market – but we believe our product is strong and is adaptable enough to cope with the demands of those sectors." ■

Trade Fair reports

Racing Post

THE RACING POST touchscreens have proved a big hit in the shops and it came as no surprise to learn that further development of the product was in the pipeline.

Speaking at the Bookmakers' Trade Fair, William Morris, the Racing Post's head of retail, whose role encompasses all aspects of the retail business from newspapers to touchscreens, outlined the investment his company would be making.

"We're planning to launch a new version of the touchscreens which will be on a HTML5 basis, rather than the existing flex app which requires a PC and is quite expensive to install.

"The new version will result in a lower cost to the independent bookmaker. It's also a slimline version so that it will take up less space in the shop. It's something we're excited about and we're hoping to trial it before the ICE show in February, potentially rolling

it out there and making it available on a commercial basis.

"We're preparing ourselves for the future by investing in digital concepts. We're going to launch a few different products, pick the ones that work best and bring these to market as soon as we can. We've recruited a retail development team that includes information technology and design resource. That should allow us complete control of our own content, how it's displayed in shops, and in a very cost effective way for the bookmakers. That's what we're aiming to deliver: better value for the bookmakers all the time."

William attributed the success of Racing Post touchscreens to "a combination of familiarity of the brand and the fact that it allows you access to a deeper level of content than what you would get from the newspaper. It gives you a greater sense of interactivity.

"The rise of SmartPhones has helped the touchscreens immensely because people have that familiarity with using touch devices," he added.

Other platforms are being



Racing Post's William Morris

Picture: Mary Pitt

utilised as the brand progresses and develops, notably tablets.

"Tablets seem to be the biggest one at the moment in terms of what we're hearing from bookmakers," observed William. "We're looking at developing a tablet in a couple of different sizes of screen. Anything that has a browser will be capable of running this.

"We have some very talented designers – I think that's been borne out by the success of our own iPhone app and our iPad apps. To try and replicate the success that certain bookmakers have seen online, we're taking

our content and replicating it in retail on a more dynamic basis than you're going to get from the papers."

He added that they plan to incorporate additional sports.

"The Racing Post covers an awful lot of various sports content," he said. "It's in our newspaper every day, it's on our website. We cover golf in detail in the paper and we're going to look at how that is received on the touchscreens. We'd certainly be looking to integrate with touchscreen terminals within the next six months." ■

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Super Soccer

“OUR INDUSTRY doesn’t work a normal day anyway but particularly during a World Cup,” observed Steve Fennell, Super Soccer’s general manager, reflecting on this summer’s finals in Brazil. “With the matches taking place late afternoon to late evening due to the time difference we were working overnight, as soon as the results came in, so that the next editions of the coupons were available to the shops the following morning.

“Coupon-wise it was hectic, but we provided a good service for our customers, as we always do.”

Super Soccer was out in force at the Trade Fair, making the most of the opportunity to meet and greet their customers. As the company has now been going for 40 years, there were plenty of them around to greet.

The number of mark sense coupons Super Soccer provides has also been expanded to give bookmakers a more comprehensive range.

“For example,” said Steve, “whereas previously we would only do live TV coupons for live Premier League matches and top international matches,



The Super Soccer team at their Trade Fair stand

this year we are doing match coupons for all Premier League games whether live or not. That gives bookmakers the opportunity regionally to have a coupon for customers to bet on wherever they are in the country.

“We have a couple of bookmakers who are taking advantage of using EPOS systems. We provide them with the match coupons for those grounds they’re working with. So it’s not just a case of the old traditional coupons; this is a fully working EPOS solution.

“At the moment we do up to 20 weekly match coupons and they are complemented by handicap betting for weekend and midweek, unders and overs, score and result, both teams to

score, and the traditional long list coupons for weekend/midweek European matches.

“We always used to have a good range of two-part coupons but with the success of mark sense, we’ve expanded what we used to do on two-part into the single part.”

Super Soccer Oddsfeed, in conjunction with Abelson Info, has recently upgraded its GoalscorerPricing&Settlement system (GPS). It now provides pre-match pricing for up to 18 player markets, all available via a single API.

The bespoke nature of the product allows everyone to benefit. Goalscorer prices are available either raw or with an in-built margin, and settlement data is supplied as per preferred

rule sets. A real-time resulting system powered by a live feed provides for quicker settlement, meaning that winnings are credited into a customer’s account while the game is still taking place.

Coral has recently taken the Oddsfeed service, with Jason Saywell, head of product data management at Gala Coral, commenting: “I would say it’s the best thing we have ever implemented in terms of product range and speed.”

This season has seen their biggest ever football coverage, including full coverage of the Dutch Eredivisie and the Australian A-League. They are also about to take on the Russian League in response to customer demand. ■

Elite Video Systems

TRADE FAIR REGULARS Elite Video Systems were on hand to continue their business relationship within the industry as suppliers of CCTV and access control systems, with a list of clients that includes William Hill plus leading independents Jenningsbet and Corbetts.

This year finds them in a new base, with their own dedicated offices located on the East Lancashire Road between Liverpool and Manchester.

Elite’s Ian Duncanson was pleased with how the move has gone. “It’s an office and service centre we’ve wanted for many years and now we’re fortunate to have that. It’s also served us well for taking on additional

employees.”

Last year Elite was accepted as an approved trading partner with Samsung, one of just 14 in the UK, bringing with it the dual benefits of preferential rates on both purchasing and advertising.

“We’re very proud to have that,” said Ian. “It gives us better buying power – which we can pass on to the customer – and great customer service, which helps us to be more competitive within our industry.

“Technology has moved on apace and the price of cameras has come down to a point where, rather than repairing a camera, it’s beneficial now for a client to upgrade and purchase a new one rather than sending it away for repair.”

Last year Elite demonstrated the latest IP (Internet Protocol) mega-pixel technology which enables CCTV operators to



Elite’s Ian Duncanson

Picture: Mary Pitt

zoom into an image, giving a far clearer image on playback. At the time it was still in its infancy and while it is still early days, it has already moved on from 3 mega-pixels to 5 mega-pixels.

Noted Ian: “The definition on surveillance cameras these days, when you can zoom in after an event, is far better for providing evidence for the police to act upon.” ■

Trade Fair reports

Link Integrated Security Services

MANSFIELD-BASED BUT WITH engineers all around the country and also in Europe and Africa, Link Integrated Security Services was making its Bookmakers' Trade Fair debut.

The company has been going since 2001, having been founded by its managing director Jim Leitch. Prior to striking out and establishing his own company, he had worked at senior level within a number of major national companies, including sales and marketing director of Quadrant Video Systems plc.

Their comprehensive range of services encompasses video analytics, CCTV, fire alarms, intruder detection, emergency lighting, automatic barriers and gates, electric fencing, biometrics, access control and door intercoms.

Said Jim: "We've been in retail; we work for the government on the Critical Network Infrastructure projects – we've

got a second office based in the United Utilities building – and we're currently involved with £5 million of work for the utilities companies, governed primarily by the security services, M15.

"Our range of security work has varied from installing a security system for a betting shop right up to the United States Air Force base at Mildenhall, in Suffolk, which was a £2.5 million project."

Other clients include Severn Trent Water, the National Grid, the Army, Navy and RAF, the Prison Service, Her Majesty's Courts Service and Travelodge.

Within the betting industry, Link handles the maintenance and installation of all the Coral betting shops, and is now looking to expand into other LBO environments.

Link has developed a product called StaffGuard to protect shop staff from confrontational, abusive or violent customers in the workplace. It is now



Link's founder and MD Jim Leitch

Picture: Mary Pitt

installed in over 8,000 locations nationwide.

"The StaffGuard unit is perfect for the independent LBO," said Jim, "reasonably priced, both the installation and the monitoring of it. If you buy StaffGuard we'll supply free monitoring of your intruder alarm, your CCTV and your fire alarm, all for roughly £100-£150 a year.

Link Integrated Security Systems Ltd is among just a handful of companies specializing in the delivery of

after-sales customer care as a core offering, and not as a by-product of an installation business.

"We specialise in after sales and service," said Jim. "We look after something like 4,500 sites nationwide. Our service statistics are 93 per cent first fix rate, 92 per cent time to respond to SLA (service level agreement); our telefix rate is round about the 22 per cent mark, which we don't charge for. We're certainly at the top end of statistics for our industry." ■

TVC

TVC, THE COMMERCIAL division of TV and Video Direct, were showcasing their digital signage at the Bookmakers' Trade Fair with their enhanced BetSignage product. These were displayed in an impressive window shop display created by TVC's partner Maxim Creative.

TVC's Andy Greaves said: "Bet Signage is a very affordable system creating fantastic promotional opportunities for the shops. We are showing the signage on four high-bright LED screens, from Sharp, Bauer, Samsung and a new product from America called Dynascan. They're very popular in the US; they're in all the Macy's stores. They're a fantastic screen.

"With these screens you are looking at a brightness rating of 3,000 candela compared to the standard TV in our homes that tend to have 250 candela rating. This means that they can cope with direct, strong sunlight. We can't put a normal TV in a window; they're not designed to do that. These

screens are designed to go portrait as well as landscape where a conventional TV will only go landscape. Even the entry level large format display screens are approximately three times brighter than a normal TV, meaning they are suitable for a north facing shop front."

The screens are powered by MyLook software, a Linux-based signage system.

"Linux is far more secure and robust than a Windows-based system," said Andy. "With Windows software, when you switch on you have to go through the boot-up process, but with a Linux-based computer you literally pull the plug out and it will start afresh as soon as you plug it back in; it doesn't have to reboot. So customers can have the screen in their window, with the computer behind it, and when they go home they can flick the switch, no problem at all. It's a really robust, heavy duty media player based on Linux software."

Last year TVC secured a hold in the pub business, having been awarded a maintenance



TVC's Andy Greaves

Picture: Mary Pitt

contract with Greene King plc. They have now increased their presence by adding Punch

Taverns to their portfolio. "We do reactive maintenance, looking after a large part of

RM Print

ROMFORD-BASED RM PRINT Group was showcasing a product called RIPS – RIPS standing for Replaceable Ink Pack System – a joint development in conjunction with Epson.

RM Print's managing director Arash Behmanesh explained: "RIPS is something that is revolutionising the print industry as a whole. The technology is 80 per cent more energy efficient than running a laser printer; it also takes ink packs that handle up to 75,000 pages' worth of printing, which is a vast improvement on every laser printer in the market at the moment. And for what it does, the size of it is suitable for any retail betting environment."

It is widely accepted that up to two-thirds of pre-printed coupons end up being thrown away unused. "Pre-printed coupons are a thing of the past as far as independents are concerned," observed Arash. "Pretty much all independents are printing in-shop, a lot of them with us.

"Potentially for an independent, this could provide more than two years' of

uninterrupted coupon printing. This means that they may not have to change the cartridge for up to two years, or even beyond that depending on their usage. This is what we've been showcasing at the Trade Fair and the response has been brilliant; everybody who looks at it loves it.

"Mark Jarvis has come on board, plus a large number of smaller independents that have been acquired in the past 12 months. We also have an agreement with OpenBet whereby many of the OpenBet customers are using us, and our software is the only MPS (managed print service) software currently that sits on their platform. We're the only ones at the moment that have gone through the process with OpenBet to get our software accredited. We can have visibility over any customer on the OpenBet platform to whom we provide the print solution."

It's not just about cutting costs, he insists, it's also about generating more business and the ability to produce customized products at a local level – and after all, a coupon is just that, a product.

"It's providing the customer



RM Print's Arash Behmanesh with Epson's John Cook and Andy Jackson

Picture: Mary Pitt

with a wider choice of things to bet on, that are perhaps more relevant to them," says Arash.

"We're also exploring other products for the retail gaming environment. One of them is short-throw projection technology in the place of a traditional screen-based system. This is an industry that had moved and developed significantly over the past few years and can now compete with traditional screens on functionality, performance, and price.

"Scanning units is another.

A number of our clients have difficulty in sourcing scanners for their shops to be delivered within a reasonable time frame, and often they've found that an entire till system installation can be held up as a result of delays in acquiring scanners.

"Together with Epson – the market leader and world number one with this kind of technology – we have already developed a product that we're currently testing for retail betting shops and which will be available from January 2015." ■

Greene King's estate," said Andy. "They've also given us a number of refurbis so whenever they open a new pub we'll be providing everything including digital signage, with all the screens in the pub, plus the audio."

TVC were also exhibiting a new product on their stand: a video wall control system.

"It works over IP", explained Andy. "By using a clever HD to IP converter technology we can give unlimited functionality across all the sources a shop might have such as SIS, SIS+, Turf TV, Sky and digital channels.

"For example, if a shop had a video wall with four separate live channels and then wanted any of those four to go across all four screens for a feature event, you need simply press a button on your iPhone or android device. This technology is around a third of the price of conventional HD matrix technology normally used." ■

Rufus and PST join forces

BOTH RUFUS AND Prestige Seating Technology were making their debuts at last year's Bookmakers' Trade Fair, exhibiting opposite each other. This year, they combined their talents and expertise on the expanded Rufus stand.

The two weren't just neighbours at the Trade Fair; they discovered that geographically their businesses were in close proximity as well, with PST based in South Shields and Rufus only eight miles away in Sunderland.

With over 25 years' design experience, Rufus uses retail anthropology, analyzing and understanding consumer behaviour, to design and then manufacture and install retail space and create branding for



Rufus' Ian Wright and PST's Stephen Treharne

Picture: Mary Pitt

bookmakers.

Says Rufus' managing director Ian Wright: "We've been growing and spreading the word about what we do a bit more over the last year. We've redesigned and refreshed shops for some of the best-known, longest-established independents in the country: Pridmore, Don Noble, Winning Post and Carrigill's alongside a lot of work we'd already done for Stan James.

"That, for me, is a result; getting to that level where you're accepted."

Now in their 48th year, PST offers a wide range of quality, British-made seating for the casino and bookmaking industry.

Stephen Treharne, PST's MD adds: "We'd met briefly at the ICE show in February 2013. Then Ian and Austin (Carney) came to our factory and we started doing work together; ►

Bookmakers!

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Rufus/PST (continued)

it's a great partnership that works well for us as well as the clients."

Ian continues: "They showed us around the factory, and they told us their story. We looked at their products and the passion we shared for quality and decided to work together. We designed a range of seats for Stan James which PST manufactured and the end results were really well received. So, at this year's BOS Show we thought, why not have a larger joint stand and share the costs. It's worked really well. Stan James wanted to be involved with a multi-screen display, so everybody wins.

"It's a great relationship, we bounce ideas off each other and we dovetail with the customers. Their ethos is the same as ours, it's about achieving a high quality end product for a mid-range price."

Stephen stresses that "The betting shop industry needs a product that will last." Shops don't do a refit every six months, so they shouldn't have to replace their chairs that often.

Ian comments: "If it's going to work in a Vegas casino, it's going to work in a betting shop."

As if to cap it off, Rufus's stand won the best of the show award from the Racing Post. ■

Anywhere Media

THE UK'S BIGGEST ad walker company, Anywhere Media, was among the companies making their debut at this year's Trade Fair.

Long gone is the sight of a wrinkled, sad-faced soul inside a sandwich board advertising a sale at the local shoe shop. This is the Rolls Royce of the service, designed to interact and generate consumer interest in the brand. They display messages using unique LED backlit display boards and have the ability to go anywhere.

"We own 150 boards, we have 25 team leaders that work for us, so we're able to target 25 locations in one specific day," explained Christian Charles, Anywhere Media's commercial director. "We normally have about 10 ad walkers per team leader.

"A lot of what we do is about awareness and getting footfall to your door. We can promote your brand out into other areas and help you compete with the big firms. We specialize in getting people through your door so you can then sell to them, or, if for example you've got an app that you want to promote, we can get people out there, feet on the street, who can guide people through the process."

Anywhere Media's presence at the Bookmakers' Trade Fair was designed to let people know what they do. The Sutton



Ad Walker Katie Cowel

Picture: Mary Pitt

Coldfield-based company works with a wide range of different brands in the events industry and in town centre retail and is keen to work within the sports betting industry too.

"We supply the whole package – the people, the boards, the production, the development," said Christian. "We also give people live pictures on the day, so if their social media department wants to tweet about it or put it on Facebook, they've got content to do so. Then we'll give them an activity report at the end of the campaign so they'll know what happened on the day, and they'll have pictures to back it up.

"We have micro-packages available as well. For the smaller bookmakers, if they just want two ad walkers for a day, say for a four-hour period, we're able to cover that nationwide."

Trade Fair reports

There's no doubting the fact that attractive, good looking people project a positive image, and Anywhere Media's extrovert staff do just that.

"They're outgoing, they like talking to people," enthused Christian. "We like to call them 'performers' because it's all about performing and displaying the board and getting people interested in it.

"It makes a difference and shows people in different ways because it stands out. We've

all gone past adverts without remembering them, they blend into the background, but when you see one of our ad walkers it's a case of 'I haven't seen that before' and people respond to it and take the message in.

"Often, when people see one of our ad walkers they take a 'selfie' and tweet about it, which then gets passed on to all their social media followers as well, so it's more enhancement of the brand." ■

A Bet A

A BET A had advertised they'd be showcasing six additional bet management systems at the Trade Fair, including Tote Express direct integration with EPOS, mobile EPOS, betting on derivative markets directly through EPOS terminals, and SMS and mobile app betting.

They did and all proved of interest, but none more so than one that hadn't been listed: screen displays driven directly from EPOS tills.

"It's brand new for us but we felt it was important for us to do, partly for customers overseas where the screen system is in demand, but also because it changes the nature of installing and maintaining," said A Bet A's co-founder Chris Latter.

"We found there was a problem not being able to deliver screens without also delivering complicated graphics hardware. That's a sizeable cost for any betting shop, so these screens work off HDMI ports on televisions, which means that the till is driving the screens directly. It cuts out all the hardware.

"They're basically working like local websites; what you see is a website page being driven by a database that's in the tills.

"There is scope for much further development but it's based on HTML5, which is one of the more commonplace web development languages out there, and it lends itself very well to mixing all sorts of digital media, whether it's movies, sound, graphics or data.

"It allows the bookmaker to have a screen system that's branded down to the individual shop. There's no complex studio

head-end that has to drive it; it's been driven solely by the tills and is now being deployed in a number of customer sites. One of the most popular features is the ability to have them in more than one language, so English and Polish works for Boston, Lincolnshire; English and Chinese works for London's Soho. And Irish eyes are already smiling at the Gaelic version."

While developed principally for A Bet A's overseas customers, Chris noted there had also been interest from the UK and Ireland at the Trade Fair, at which he reported the business had been busier than anticipated.

A Bet A also showcased live streams of virtual products. Three of them – horses, dogs and football – were from Kiran, while a fourth – boxing – came from Veros, who shared A Bet A's stand at ICE earlier this year. The screen displays allow A Bet A to mix in the data for those games as well as play them out of shop.

Another feature on show was the Betsee system, a security add-on which allows cashiers to take a high-resolution snapshot frame of the counter at the time the bet is placed and at the time of payout, giving an associated image with each transaction.

"The other big thing is the integration with the Tote pools, which we've been demonstrating here," said Chris. "We are working on integrating two other pool products, one is Tote Ireland, the other is Phumelela. There seems to be a gently growing demand for more variety in pool betting products, so we're starting to cater for that. It seems to be going down well in the shops." ■



Picture: Mary Pitt

Innovation has long been a watchword with A Bet A, so the recent 'Share a Coke with your Name' advertising campaign presented them with an opportunity they couldn't resist.

Nestled in an ice bucket on the A Bet A stand at the Trade Fair was a supply of Betty coke bottles – complete with A Bet A bottle opener – which proved highly appealing to visitors throughout the day.

"Over the years our customers have referred to our system as 'Betty'," explained Chris Latter. "We've never said it was called Betty but it's a name that's stuck. And what you don't do when a name sticks is try to change it."

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A Christmas Carve-up

by Angus Dalrymple

EXACTLY 50 years ago I was asked by the editor of the *Sporting Life* to write a short story. He needed it to fill space in next day's paper because racing was cancelled due to snow.

I'm sure BOS readers will appreciate that my story was written when betting shops were still in their infancy and the great technological advances of today simply didn't exist half a century ago.

OLD BOB CRATCHIT shivered in the cold as he waited in a doorway outside the village betting shop.

It was the week of Christmas and for Bob, a penniless, out-of-work ex-punter, the going was hard. For four whole days he had been unable to afford to place a bet. Hence my use of 'ex-' before the word 'punter'.

Cratchit was waiting for the door of the betting shop to open. He knew that his bookmaker, Sid Crooge, would be coming out because heavy snow had stopped racing and the pub would soon be open.

Minutes later the ex-punter's vigil was rewarded when Sid Crooge opened his shop door. Intent as Sid was on downing a brandy to celebrate the impending resumption of racing on Boxing Day, the bookmaker frowned when Cratchit's gnarled hands clutched his lapels.

"Oh, Mr. Crooge," cried Bob. "You remember me; I've been a client of yours for thirty years. Could you do me a favour?"

"Why, yes," said Crooge, smoothing down his coat. "I know you. You back favourites across the card, don't you, increasing your stakes after a loser."

The bookmaker gazed kindly into Cratchit's anxious face. If this was a touch, Crooge reflected it would be worth it. Why, the down-at-heel character who confronted him had been betting with the firm since the dark days of the depression and in the boom years beyond.

Crooge took out a one-pound note. "Here, take this, Cratchit, and get yourself a drink for Christmas."

Old Bob hung his head. "It's not charity I want, guv'nor," he whined, "it's work. I'm desperate for a job."

Sid Crooge frowned. Cratchit's plea

touched his heart, but what on earth could he give the old punter to do?

Suddenly Crooge's face brightened and he put the pound note back in his pocket.

"Come into the shop, Bob," he said. "It so happens there is a little job you can do, and if you're good at it I might consider taking you on full time."

Cries of "God bless you, guv'nor!" rent the air as the ex-punter and the kindly bookmaker went into the betting shop.

HOLLY AND TINSEL had been pinned over the counter. There was bunting all around the pay-out window. And on the blackboard, in his best possible chalk-writing, the firm's board-boy, Tiny Tim, was putting finishing touches to the legend: "A happy Christmas to all our cash clients – win only at all meetings on Boxing Day."

Sid Crooge led Cratchit to an office at the back.

"It's like this," he said, taking a pile of fading accounts from a drawer, "in the old days when I used to give credit I was 'knocked' by many of my clients.

"Altogether," Crooge continued, "they owe me more than a thousand pounds, and the job I have in mind for you is this: I want you to write to this shower of so-and-so's and see if you can get any money out of them. If you succeed, you've got yourself a job for life."

Even as he blew dust from the yellowing pages Sid knew in his heart the bad debts would never be paid. And he cursed himself for being a kind-hearted fool.

"Thank you, guv'nor," exclaimed Cratchit. "I'll start now. All I need is a pen and some paper."

The ex-punter perched himself on a stool at a roll-top desk and began his task.

There were 30 letters to be written to the debtors, and as Cratchit's pen scratched on all the afternoon Sid Crooge thought: "Poor old codger, he's got no chance. I'll pay him off with a few quid at the end of the week. He's doing his best."

By eight o'clock, however, Cratchit had finished his work. The ex-punter climbed down from his stool, went to the door, and trudged off through the snow into the night. He knew what he must do. He would deliver the letters personally to the defaulters that very night.

THE FOLLOWING DAY it was Christmas Eve in the betting shop. There was no horse-racing, no dogs, no football – not even a boxing match on which the villagers could bet.

Sid Crooge sat behind the counter, snoozing in an armchair. One of his feet rested on an upturned wastepaper basket by the silent tape-machine. His other foot rested in front of the drawer of the cash register. It was Crooge's favourite position; he felt he could sleep with confidence.

And where, pray, was Tiny Tim? For a few hours he had busied himself blowing up balloons and tying them over the shop's blackboard. And now, for want of something better to do, he was passing the time tearing up old fixed odds football coupons and turning them into Yuletide decorations.

And what of faithful Bob Cratchit, the elderly ex-punter, where was he?

He was in the back room sipping tea and wistfully studying the 'Fate of the Favourites' table in the good old *Sporting Life*.

Morning became afternoon. Afternoon became early evening. And Cratchit became anxious. Would his letters to the defaulters do the trick? Ah, he was soon to learn his fate, the last postal delivery was due at any minute.

At five o'clock, Cratchit's heart missed a beat as the betting shop door burst open. It was, friends, the village postman.

The postman said cheerfully, "Good evening, Mr. Crooge, a happy Christmas and the compliments of the season to 'ee, sir." At the same time, he drew a wad of letters from his bag and slid them under the grille.

Crooge woke up with a grunt. "What's this lot then?"

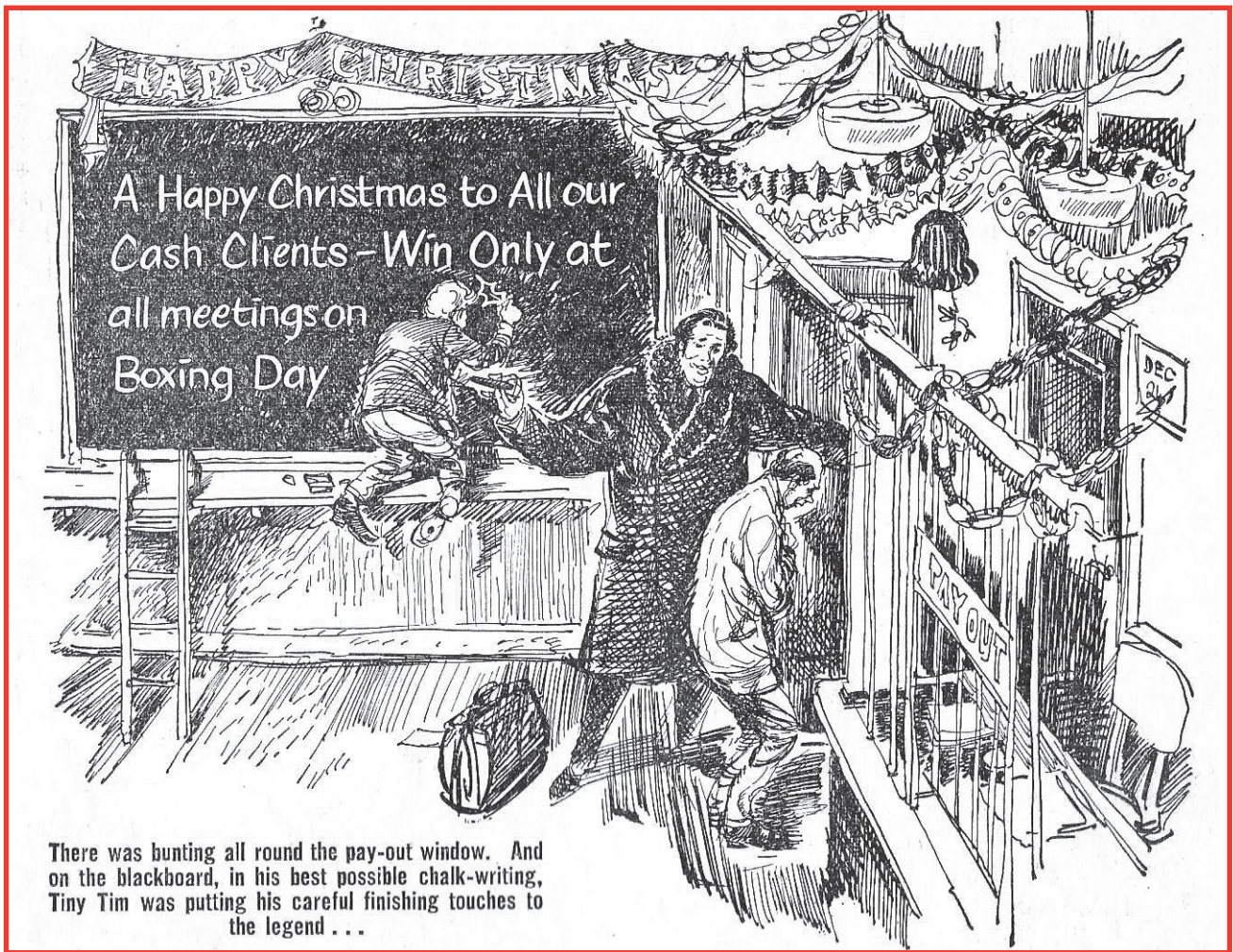
"All for you, Mr. Crooge," beamed the postman. "There's about thirty here, most of 'em registered post and the rest by special delivery. Sign here, please, and a happy Christmas."

Wide-eyed, Crooge signed for the letters, and wished the postman well.

The postman scowled and slammed the door behind him as he stamped out.

"All this mail," said Sid Crooge wonderingly. "Why, it reminds me of the days when I used to take letter bets."

He tore open the first envelope. His eyed popped as a pink-coloured cheque



There was hunting all round the pay-out window. And on the blackboard, in his best possible chalk-writing, Tiny Tim was putting his careful finishing touches to the legend . . .

fell out. Feverishly, Crooge read aloud the note which accompanied it.

“Dear Sid,” he began as Bob Cratchit and Tiny Tim listened, “Thank you for your letter and enclosed please find cheque value £55 in respect of my outstanding account of a few years ago. Owing to ill-health, I much regret I was unable to pay you sooner.”

Crooge eagerly ripped open the next envelope, and the next, and the next, until no fewer than 29 apologetic notes were stacked on one side of the counter, and 29 bundles of treasury notes, cheques, money orders and postal orders on the other.

“You’ve done it, Cratchit!” yelled Crooge, shaking the ex-punter’s head nearly off.

“Hooray!” shouted a jubilant Bob Cratchit, beside himself with glee.

“God bless us, every one!” cried Tiny Tim from his blackboard.

“Aren’t you going to open the last letter, sir?” asked the ex-punter, his eyes swivelling over to Tiny Tim.

“What letter?” demanded Crooge.

“Why, the one Tiny Tim has just put in his pocket for safe keeping, sir.”

Brave little Tim, his face flushed, bounded down from his platform and handed the last letter to his master.

The bookmaker snatched the thick envelope, tore it open and tipped the contents on the counter. Twenty crisp £5

notes fell out – and a letter.

CROOGE SQUINTED at the notepaper. “It’s from that skinfint, Jacob Marley,” he said. “He’s sent the £100 he lost over Tudor Minstrel in the 1947 Derby. Here’s what he says:

“My dear Crooge,” began Sid as he peered at the parchment and its spidery handwriting. “For you this letter will seem like a voice from the dead.”

As Tiny Tim and Bob Cratchit gathered round Crooge, the merry music of Christmas carollers came floating in through the fanlight.

“This letter,” continued Crooge as he studied his debtor’s writing, “is the voice of punters past, from your once-esteemed client Jacob Marley.

“I know that in your bitter and unforgiving heart, you, Crooge, with the passing of the years, must have regarded me as a hopeless defaulter. As you know, my debt to you was incurred many years ago in a long-forgotten Derby.”

Sid Crooge reached for one of Tiny Tim’s blackboard dusters and dabbed at his eyes.

He read on: “I now enclose one hundred pounds to settle my ante-post wager on Tudor Minstrel, and, in paying this overdue account, wish to point out that my delay in settling was caused by

a run of bad luck, domestic difficulties, the depression, the credit squeeze, and so forth.

“But whilst writing to you this Christmas, and especially on re-reading your letter, I wish to point out that those handy little books – dictionaries – are available these days for a very small amount.

“For your guidance,” continued Crooge as he read Marley’s words, “and referring in particular to what you say you are going to do to me if I fail to pay, the word ‘throttle’ does not begin with an ‘f’, the word ‘choke’ is not spelled c-h-o-o-a-k, the word ‘strangle’ does not have two ‘g’s’ in it, and there are two ‘c’s’, not one, in the accident you say you are going to arrange for me.

“Finally, Crooge, your threat to have me incinerated is surely out of context. The word you are searching for is obviously ‘exterminated’, unless, of course, you are hinting that you intend to burn my house down with me in it.”

Sid Crooge thoughtfully pocketed the payments from his long-forgotten debtors.

Tiny Tim, cheerfully whistling as always, went back to his blackboard.

And old Bob Cratchit – what did he do?

Why, he’s been working for the Crooge firm ever since.

As general manager, of course. ■

Miss Betting Shop reflects on her title

by **Chris Pitt**

Sheila Modley has recently retired from the small, century-old family business that is McGaffigans, located in the Lancashire coastal town of Bolton-le-Sands, near Carnforth.

McGaffigans deal in bespoke iron work, manufacturing everything from gates to railings to spiral staircases to pretty much anything that comprises wrought iron. The company's Lawn and Leisure division offers a range of quad bikes and garden machinery.

Having worked for, and subsequently run, McGaffigans from the age of 18, she can look back on a working life well spent. And when she pulls out the photos, she can also reflect on the day, 50 years ago, when Sheila Modley was crowned Miss Betting Shop 1964.

The Miss Betting Shop contest was far removed from today's Betting Shop Manager of the Year. It evolved from a series entitled 'Miss Counter Attraction' in the *Sporting Life*, an idea foisted on the paper's then betting shop reporter and now BOS columnist Angus Dalrymple by 'Life' editor Ossie Fletcher. Fletcher instructed Angus to invite bookmakers to send in their employees' photos and the best ones would be published in the 'Life', knowing full well that as the law did not allow bookmakers to advertise their shops, they would welcome any publicity they could get, which might in turn encourage them to buy the 'Life' rather than its (cheaper) daily rival, the *Sporting Chronicle*.

But how did a Lancashire lass from a firm of wrought iron producers end up as a betting shop beauty queen? Well, it's like this:

Sheila's grandfather, Patrick McGaffigan, a blacksmith by trade, journeyed over from Ireland in the early years of the twentieth century and bought a smithy at Bolton-le-Sands.

"He used to shoe all the horses in the area – farm horses, carthorses, British Waterways Shire horses," says Sheila.

"He had to make all the different sizes of horseshoe; large ones for the Shire horses, medium and small ones. And he had to make all the tools because you couldn't go out and buy things from manufacturers.

"When my grandfather retired, my father (Jack) and uncle (Tom) took over and they started producing aluminium shoes for the racehorses at the local racing stables.

"I'd always been involved with horses



Sheila Modley - Miss Betting Shop 1964 with her award

Picture: Supplied

from when I was young. I had my own ponies and I used to watch my father shoeing horses.

"I remember one day a man from Chipperfield's circus came to see us to ask if my father could go to the circus in Morecambe to cut the toenails of an elephant!

"With the connections we had with all the racing stables in the area, they opened a betting office called McGaffigans Turf Accountants in one of the firm's buildings.

"I started there when they opened the shop, aged 18, learning to take bets and settle the accounts.

"I think it was one of the staff who sent my picture to the *Sporting Life*."

The Miss Betting Shop competition formed part of the annual Bookmakers' and Betting Shops' Exhibition, held at the New Horticultural Hall in London's Vincent Square. It was there that the ten finalists representing firms such as Gus

Demmy, Corbetts and City Tote Ltd assembled on Tuesday, November 17, 1964.

They paraded twice along the catwalk, first in bathing costumes, then in dresses, before the panel of judges reached their verdict, naming Sheila Modley of McGaffigans, with classic vital statistics of 36-24-36, as the winner. Jane Smith of Glasgow firm J. Carville Ltd was runner-up, with third place going to Janet Jones of Tote Betting Office, Ellesmere Port.

"I was 26 when I won Miss Betting Shop," recalls Sheila. "Not long afterwards, maybe three months, I had a call from New York from a television company who had a programme called 'To Tell The Truth'. They thought being Miss Betting Shop was very unusual and interesting and invited me to appear on their show.

"It was the first time I'd flown. I flew over first-class, stayed for five days, had all the beauty treatments, and was chauffeured everywhere. It was fantastic.

“On the show, I was with three other women, all pretending to be me, and the panel had to guess who the real Miss Betting Shop was.

“When I came back from America I had letters from all over. It even made the papers in Hong Kong, reporting about Miss Betting Shop – I’ve still got the article.”

As life returned to normality, she settled down to working in the family business, taking over the reins when her father and uncle retired in the 1980s.

“We closed the betting shop when I took over the company,” she says. “It had been my father and uncle that had run it and did all the laying off. I couldn’t do that and we needed the space for other things. When I took over we went in another direction by starting Lawn and Leisure but continued with the iron work.

“We still have the original smithy with all the old beams, the old bellows, and the handle that my grandmother used to pull to blow the air into the forge. We’ve still got the anvil and all the tools that my grandfather made. We’ve kept that because it’s like going back in time and people today haven’t seen anything like it. Even now we have students from local colleges coming to have a look around and we can show them how they used to work in iron in the olden days.

“We’ve modernised things a lot but it’s still that smithy where the horses were

shod.”

Although now retired, leaving McGaffigans to be managed by her son Paul, Sheila remains a director of the business and will, she insists, “still pop in” from time to time.

“It started with my grandfather, then my father and uncle, then me, now my son, and his two sons are now in the business, so that’s five generations,” she says proudly.

Sheila’s father-in-law was the famous Yorkshire comedian Albert Modley, star of stage, screen and radio. Billed as ‘Lancashire’s favourite Yorkshireman’ he was among the headline acts in the heyday of variety, frequently topping the bill over the likes of Bob Monkhouse and Morecambe and Wise. His catchphrase was “Eeeeeeehh! Isn’t it grand when you’re daft?!”

But there’s nothing daft about Albert’s daughter-in-law, still as sharp as a tack and looking forward to making the most of her retirement with increased visits to her favourite Spanish island of Majorca.

“We’ve been going to Majorca for many years,” she says. “I met a guy named Dave in Magaluf. He was the first (unofficial) bookie there. He used to have a large poster of me in his betting office/pub!”

It’s proof that fame, however fleeting, can sometimes endure, even half a century later. Something, perhaps, on which 2014’s Betting Shop Manager of the Year may choose to reflect. ■

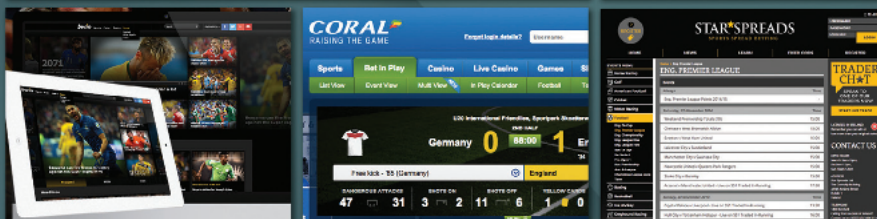
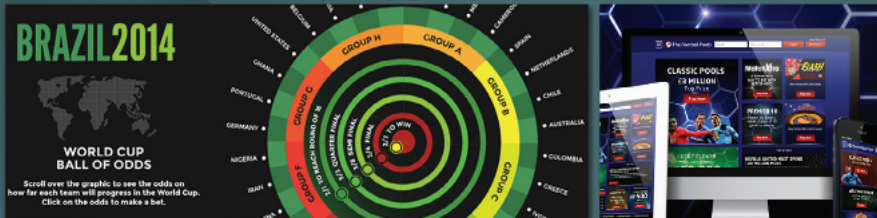


Sheila Modley as she is today

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BOOK REVIEW by Mary Pitt

William Hill, The Man & The Business

GRAHAM SHARPE HAS been a columnist for BOS Magazine since the very first issue appeared in 1981. He has been with the William Hill organisation in various capacities for nearly a decade longer than that, giving him exceptional insight into the man and the company bearing his name.

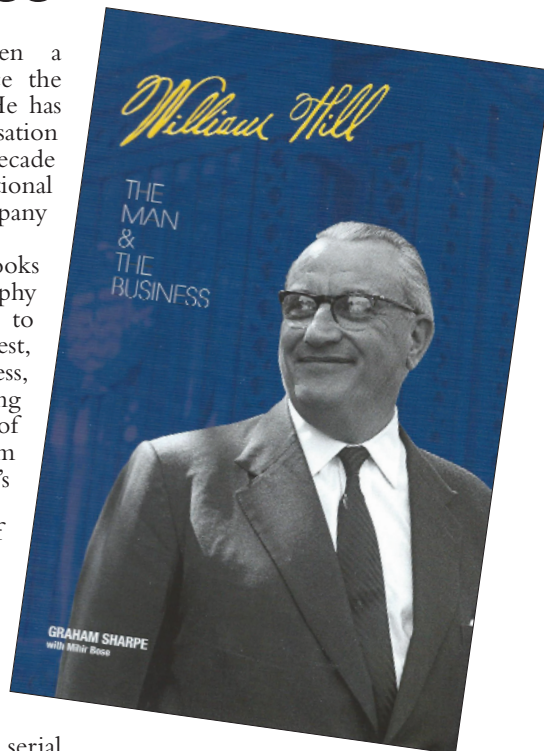
Graham has written several books on topics as varied as the biography of Screaming Lord Sutch to how to calculate winning bets. His latest, *William Hill, the Man & the Business*, co-written with award-winning journalist Mihir Bose, tells the story of a Birmingham native who rose from humble origins to become the world's biggest bookmaker.

It paints a well-rounded picture of Hill using recollections from family members, such as his brother, Joe Ward Hill, and friends, including Timeform founder Phil Bull.

The volume pulls no punches; it is, as they say, a 'warts and all' biography, not glossing over his perfectionist personality and his serial womanizing. Totally the opposite of how he conducted his personal life, he brought honesty and integrity to his dealings in his business, and in his desire to bring respectability to his profession.

The book covers his early years setting up his phone and credit business, his time betting on the rails, offering reasons as to why he stopped betting on course in 1955, and his reluctance to open his own betting shops when they were first legalised in 1961. The first William Hill shops didn't appear until 1967.

He took particular pride in his role as a breeder of racehorses, including 1949 Derby



winner Nimbus, at both his Sezincote and Whitsbury Manor studs. The latter is still being run by his nephew, Chris Harper.

The second half of the book chronicles the history of the company after William's death in 1971, from various changes in ownership through to its flotation on the stock market, the brief flirtation with spread betting and the rise of FOBTs, the introduction of betting through new technology, especially mobile devices, and the expansion of William Hill worldwide.

The story is brought is right up to date with the retirement of CEO Ralph Topping and the recent appointment of James Henderson to head the company.

An entire chapter is devoted to some of the more bizarre bets that have been taken (and refused) by the firm over the years, and there is a fine selection of both black and white and colour photographs.

Overall, a thorough, interesting, clearly written history of one of bookmaking's major players. ■

William Hill, The Man & The Business, by Graham Sharpe, with Mihir Bose; is published by Racing Post Books, £20.

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- Rugby Union
- Snooker
- TV Specials

up to six extra dog bet options
up to four extra horse bet options
race by race poster bet splash screen
**dedicated screens required*

12:15 Clairwood

Betting Without	Place Only
W/O 02. Alexander	6-10
85-40 06. Badger Friendly	6-10
5-2 01. Professor X	7-10
8-5 05. Szechuan	Evs
5-1 04. Spin A Coin	7-5
5-2 03. Sacred Spirit	2-1
4-1 12. Electric Blue	18-5
4-1 08. Grey's Olive	18-5
10-1 07. Adjaal	11-2
16-1 10. Bermuda	8-1

Enhanced Win Market Show Alexander 10.3

CASH BACK
If 2nd To Szechuan

All specials Win Singles only. Max stake £50. Cash Back on win market only.

12:18 Belle Vue

Betting Without	Place Only
12-5 1 Baby Blue Hawk	10-11
12-5 2 Belfast Child	23-20
12-5 3 Drumcrow Stacey	23-20
4-1 4 Jumeirah Banjo	2-1
4-1 5 Broomhill Flash	2-1
11-4 6 Kersal Mason	13-10

2 Dogs in Top 3 We Pay 7-4 in this race.

CASH BACK
If 2nd To Drumcrow Stacey

Warming Distance ride 1 wgn 1.2 wgn

3-4 Odd Traps vs. Even Traps 19-20

Italy V Brazil

Saturday, 22/06/2012 10:00:00

Match Result	Handicap Betting	Over/Under 2.5 Goals	Both Teams to Score
Italy 5-5	Italy (+1)	Over 2.5 Goals	0-11
Even 12-5	Brazil (-1)	Under 2.5 Goals	Even
Brazil 17-10	Brazil (-1)		

CORRECT SCORES

ITALY TO WIN	DRAW	BRAZIL TO WIN
1-0 1.3	0-0 1.5	1-0 1.8
2-0 2.5	1-1 2.2	2-0 2.8
3-0 4.5	2-1 3.5	3-0 4.5
4-0 8.5	3-1 5.5	4-0 8.5
5-0 15.0	4-1 8.5	5-0 15.0
6-0 25.0	5-1 12.0	6-0 25.0
7-0 45.0	6-1 18.0	7-0 45.0
8-0 85.0	7-1 28.0	8-0 85.0
9-0 150.0	8-1 45.0	9-0 150.0
10-0 250.0	9-1 70.0	10-0 250.0
11-0 450.0	10-1 110.0	11-0 450.0
12-0 850.0	11-1 180.0	12-0 850.0
13-0 1500.0	12-1 280.0	13-0 1500.0
14-0 2500.0	13-1 450.0	14-0 2500.0
15-0 4500.0	14-1 700.0	15-0 4500.0
16-0 8500.0	15-1 1100.0	16-0 8500.0
17-0 15000.0	16-1 1800.0	17-0 15000.0
18-0 25000.0	17-1 2800.0	18-0 25000.0
19-0 45000.0	18-1 4500.0	19-0 45000.0
20-0 85000.0	19-1 7000.0	20-0 85000.0

OTHER SCORES ARE AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

SCORECASTS - 1st GOALSCORER & CORRECT SCORE
PLAYER'S TEAM TO WIN

Weekend Quickslip Coupon

BOOKMAKERS SINCE 1917

Game	Event	Key	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th	13th	14th	15th	16th	17th	18th	19th	20th
1	10:00	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
2	10:00	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
3	10:00	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
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18	10:00	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
19	10:00	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
20	10:00	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10

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