



Analysis: What it means that the NFL is embracing betting

Bet.Works chair Dr Laila Mintas analyzes the NFL's exclusive data deal with Sportradar and whether it will encourage new forms of betting in the US



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The **NFL** is the last of the four established US major leagues to have officially embraced sports betting after the repeal of PASPA last year.

Neither the length nor value of the partnership have been disclosed, but **Sportradar** has secured a significant package of exclusive rights, including NFL streaming rights to sportsbooks outside the US to improve their live betting products.

As around 75% of all betting in Europe happens during the game, it is a significant market and these **streaming** rights are almost essential for bookmakers to provide their customers with an appealing live experience.

Only through the streaming rights can bookmakers provide the watch-and-bet experience, allowing the sports fan to visit the bookmaker's application or website to watch the game and place a bet at the same time. This way they make sure the customer stays on their application or website.

For sports fans who want to consume sports and place bets, this means a much less fragmented experience.



While this is a totally common way to consume sports in Europe, it is new to the US and could revolutionize how fans place bets on games.

However, as the NFL has made these rights available to some markets outside the US only, we cannot expect to see such new products that enable a watch-and-bet product in the US anytime soon. It remains to be seen whether other leagues will make their streaming rights available for sports betting in the near future.

A reason why the rights might not have been made available yet could be the broadcast deals that the NFL currently has in place. In most jurisdictions, using live audiovisual game feeds for sports betting is not seen as a conflict or competition to the broadcast rights and go hand in hand.

While the broadcast rights can be made available to a broader market and are much more expensive, sports betting operators are only allowed to use the provided stream on their properties. The size and quality of the stream is usually limited so that the streaming experience cannot replace or compete with the viewing experience via broadcast.



Official betting data

There is no other jurisdiction around the world where leagues and operators have fought so hard over the value of official versus unofficial data.

Official data means that the company selling the data has an official mandate to do so by the league or rights holder but it does not necessarily say anything about the quality of

data. Official data often comes with higher pricing and often the only value it provides is that it can be marketed by the operator as such.

Up until now, all the different data companies have been selling unofficial NFL data as there was no official feed available.



NFL official play-by-play statistics and player-tracking data

The deal expands Sportradar's relationship with the NFL, with the company being the exclusive distribution partner for the league's official play-by-play statistics, as well as the NFL's proprietary Next Gen Stats player-tracking data partner for media outlets.

However, through the new deal, Sportradar will also be able to use the data for sports betting in the US and internationally where sports betting is legal and regulated.

As sports betting is in the process of being legalized throughout the country, will the tracking data be used for NFL sports betting products? The insights provided through tracking data can be used to create a new generation of sports betting products that are yet to exist.

Fans could, for example, bet on the speed of players or even predict if the next play will be a run or a pass based on various factors. These new types of betting products based on tracking data could revolutionize the betting market.

Integrity services

The new deal also includes integrity services to monitor betting across all NFL games – pre-season, regular-season, and post-season. Monitoring systems compare the performance of the athletes on the field with the movements of the betting market to identify irregularities that could be linked to match manipulation. According to studies, \$200bn in bets were placed by Americans in offshore markets before PASPA was repealed.

These black markets are difficult to monitor and are more susceptible to manipulations than regulated markets. As more states legalize sports betting, the likelihood of match manipulations decreases. However, integrity monitoring is still essential and, even when it is overdue, it is still a milestone to see the NFL finally officially using an integrity monitoring service.

Conclusion

US fans shouldn't expect a watch-and-bet NFL betting product any time soon, but fans outside the country could see the first products of this kind shortly.

The jurisdictions covered by the deal have not been disclosed, however NFL tracking data can now be used for betting products that could revolutionize the market and motivate other US leagues to innovate in this direction.

It will be interesting to see what the impact of the change of direction by the NFL has for the teams and players.

So far, the NFL's policy allows teams to agree sponsorship or marketing deals with casinos and almost half of the league's teams have such deals in place already. However, so far it

has been prohibited for the teams to do deals with the casinos' sportsbooks.

It remains to be seen whether the changes made to the NFL's Sportradar deal means the league has, for the first time, officially embraced sports betting.

Another question is whether NFL players might soon be able to strike sponsorship deals with betting operators or monetize their image rights through licensing deals with operators?



The league is the last of the major four established US leagues to have sold their official data to be used for sports betting, which is an additional and significant revenue stream for the leagues.

Time will tell whether the NCAA will be adjusting its strategy to the new reality that 10 US states have implemented legal sports betting and eight more states plus Washington DC recently passed legislation and will sell their data rights as well.

streaming NFL sportradar bet.works Dr Laila Mintas