

Wanna Bet?

**By Reg P. Wydeven
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In 1989, I completed my very first NCAA Basketball Tournament bracket. Being a huge Glen Rice and Rumeal Robinson fan, I picked with my heart and chose Michigan to win it all. After the Wolverines won the championship game, I figured that choosing winners must be easy, as I was able to pick the winner out of 64 teams in my very first try.

Well, twenty years later, I have filled out 20 more NCAA tourney brackets, and only 3 times have I picked the winning team. I have played fantasy football for 20 years, and I have won our league's super bowl just once. I have played our office's "pick-a-square" Packer pool dozens of times, and I don't think I've ever won.

Needless to say, I am not very good at gambling (even though it is legal gambling, because none of these ventures had any money at stake – just bragging rights, of course). Because of my lack of proficiency, gambling really doesn't appeal to me. Although, if I actually won once in a while, I might feel differently.

Apparently, I am in the minority. Lots of people like to gamble, either in games of chance, card games or by wagering on the outcome of sporting events. Knowing this, Delaware recently passed a law reactivating a sports lottery, effectively legalizing gambling in the state.

Formerly known as the paper shredding capital of the world, Delaware will now be famous for being the only state east of the Mississippi River where sports betting will be legal. Delaware, along with Oregon, Montana and, of course, Nevada, are the only four states in the country that had sports betting laws on its books when Congress passed the 1992 Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act, which banned states from being in the bookmaking business.

Because it is grandfathered, Delaware can reinstate its sports lottery, which basically equates to parlay betting. The only other time Delaware used its sports lottery was for one football season in 1976, and it was a colossal failure. The state legislature recently adopted newly-elected Governor Jack Markell's proposal to bring the sports lottery back to take advantage of the country's increased interest in gambling, especially along the condensed mid-Atlantic seaboard, where several states have gaming of some kind.

Delaware's three racinos, which are horse race tracks that carry video slot machines, will be the only venues in the state to now also host the sports lottery and table games. Governor Markell quickly signed Congress' bill into law to ensure they have enough time to have the lottery in effect when the upcoming NFL season opens.

Coincidentally, the legalization of sports betting comes about while Delaware is dealing with a nearly \$800 million budget deficit. Markell believes that the legalization of sports betting will generate more than \$50 million in its first year alone.

Not surprisingly, both the NFL and the NCAA lobbied against the bill, and the NFL has even filed a legal brief with the Delaware Supreme Court to oppose sports betting. Both entities fear the impact gambling will have on the purity of their games, claiming their competitions are not considered games of chance because skill "plays an impermissible" role.

The state Supreme Court scheduled a hearing for May 21 to hear arguments on the matter, and most people are betting they will approve of the new law.

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