

Crist, S. (1998, January 26). All Bets are Off. Sports Illustrated, pp. 82-92.

OVERVIEW

The Center for Youth Studies is pleased to have the following article review offered by a high school student. We believe that insight from young people themselves is important for today's youth workers.

So, you think that gambling on sporting events is illegal in this country? Think again. Of the estimated \$600 billion that will be wagered this year, nearly \$2,400 per man, woman, and child, \$100 billion will be wagered illegally on pro or college sports. The other \$500 billion will be wagered in casinos and on lotteries, horse races, and other legal propositions. The gambling industry that is quickly becoming an lucrative alternative is Internet gambling, which will be the focus of this article. Since 1996, Internet gambling has increased tenfold and is expected to increase another tenfold by 2001.

How difficult is it to gamble on the Internet? It is easier than writing this paper. After opening a deposit account by bank transfer or credit card, any U.S. customer can click and type his wagers on virtually any proposition involving a sporting event. When I say any proposition, I mean that you can make a bet on who will catch more passes in the Monday Night Football game. The winner of the coin toss can also be bet on. As computers advance, people will have more opportunities to bet on such issues as what play will be called or whether the next pitch thrown in the World Series will be a strike. You might ask, "How can you illegally gamble on these sports in the U.S.?" Well, the sites for these gambler's havens are based on small islands like Antigua, where gambling is legal. The tough thing for politicians to swallow is the fact that there is no way that they can enforce a law prohibiting Internet gambling. Legislation like the Gambling Prohibition Act of 1997 has been proposed, but the passing of these laws will likely increase the users.

Politicians worry that these Gambling sites might be areas to launder money. That is a secondary concern to the issue of college students gambling. For the past decade, college students have been the fastest-growing segment of the gambling population without the help of the

Internet. With the recent problems involving athletes and gambling at Arizona State, Fresno State, and Boston College, people in high places at universities are beginning to worry.

Regulation of these Internet gambling sites would be welcomed by many U.S. legislators. In the countries from which they are based, an annual licensing fee of between \$50,000 and \$75,000 is required, and extensive personal and credit investigations are implemented, and bonds—often as high as \$500,000—are posted to ensure pay offs. Most Internet gambling entrepreneurs suggest that the only reason that there are no regulations is because politicians can not decide where to put the money.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

- Can the figures given regarding the amount of illegal gambling be on target?
- If Internet gambling is regulated, where will the money go?
- Why do so many people gamble?
- How many people do you know that gamble illegally? Do you?

IMPLICATIONS

- Gambling in this country is craved so much because it is illegal. Whether you know it or not, there is a rush involved with gambling.
- Illegal gambling will never be regulated; it is too widespread.

James Briggs cCYS