

## Gambling in America on the Rise!

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by Wayne Goff

Sports betting continues to grow in America and it is a danger both to the sports industry and to the American public. It is another sign of the moral decline of our country. The issue should be obvious from the sports industry standpoint: **“How can you trust the integrity of the sport that allows gambling on its outcome?”**

How easy is it to influence the teams, the coaches, the players and the ones officiating the games? I was dismayed to find out that even golf is now allowing gambling on their tournaments. That was *the last sport* I thought had some value and integrity to it!

Perhaps I have been naive my entire life as a sports fan. Illegal gambling has gone on all of my life, and it is estimated that \$150 billion were spent illegally in this country before it was legalized. Perhaps many games we have watched and wondered how they turned out the way they did were actually influenced behind the scenes. In my observations, there is little integrity left in the NFL, NBA, and even the NCAA. The mentality in sports today seems to be: “It’s okay to cheat as long as you don’t get caught!” and “Everybody’s doing it!”

Captain Renault, in the movie “Casablanca,” sarcastically remarked at a cafe he was asked to shut down: “I am shocked, shocked, to find that gambling is going on in here.” He then pocketed his winnings and went on his merry way. I’m beginning to see that as a commentary on America today.

But **morally**, gambling is a tremendous problem. According to the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG), 6 million adults and half a million teens have a problem gambling. The annual cost associated with gambling (crime, addiction, bankruptcy) is \$17 billion in America. Approximately 76% of problem gamblers are likely to have a major depressive disorder. Children of problem gamblers are at higher risk for numerous behavioral disorders.

Biblically, the case against gambling is that it is **“theft by consent.”** Just because the participants are *willing* does not justify it. A common analogy is the old-fashioned **duel**. Just because two men agree to a duel where one or both may be shot and killed does not make it any less murder! Gambling violates the Golden Rule.

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