

NORTHERN TERRITORY RACING COMMISSION

Reasons for Decision

Complainant:	Mr C
Licensees:	Sportsbet Pty Ltd
Proceedings:	Gambling Dispute for determination by Racing Commission pursuant to section 85(2) of the <i>Racing and Betting Act 1983</i>
Heard Before: (on papers)	Mr Alastair Shields (Presiding Member) Ms Cindy Bravos Mr Allan McGill
Date of Decision:	7 June 2021

Background

1. On 5 December 2019, pursuant to section 85(2) of the *Racing and Betting Act 1983* (the Act), the complainant lodged a gambling dispute with the Northern Territory Racing Commission (the Commission) against the licensed sports bookmaker, Sportsbet Pty Ltd (Sportsbet).
2. The substance of the gambling dispute is that after having placed an Exotic Multi Bet, the complainant contacted Sportsbet and was provided with incorrect information as to how to calculate what the potential payout of the bet would be if one leg failed. The complainant has submitted that Sportsbet should payout the bet for the amount he was incorrectly advised he would win if one leg failed rather than the amount that he was paid when the bet was calculated correctly.
3. The complainant has further submitted that after receiving the advice from Sportsbet on how to calculate the potential payout for the bet, he placed a further ten bets with Sportsbet based on that advice. The complainant has submitted that Sportsbet should refund the stake of each of these bets given that he placed them based on the Sportsbet advice as to how to calculate potential payouts which Sportsbet later acknowledged was incorrect.
4. Information was gathered from both parties by a Licensing NT officer appointed as a betting inspector by the Commission and provided to the Commission which determined there was sufficient information before it, to consider the gambling dispute on the papers.

Consideration of the Issues

5. Sports betting is a form of gambling that involves a bet being struck on the outcome of a sporting event. Being able to calculate how much a bet returns for any given stake is one of the basics of betting and is a relatively easy calculation where the bet struck is of a basic nature. For example, a basic winning bet with a stake of \$2 at fixed odds (or a price) of \$4 will result in the bettor receiving a winning payout of \$8.

6. However, with the continuing growth of the online sports betting industry in Australia and around the world, sports gamblers are not only now provided with a wide range of choice as to who they can bet with but also access to a wide variety of bet types that can be placed. The betting markets that are now available can range from a basic single bet through to more complex betting markets such as multiple betting (multi bet) whereby the bettor can combine a series of single bets into one bet with the odds multiplying with each additional leg and an extension of that being, combination multiple betting (combo multi bet) which involves a cluster of bets covering all of the possible multi bet permutations selected.
7. Given the complexities of some of the betting markets now available, calculating a winning payout has also become more complex and as a result, there has been a significant increase in the number of betting calculators now available for users of online gambling providers to use to determine the payout that they would receive if they were to place a particular winning bet.
8. On 2 December 2019, the complainant placed an Exotic Multi Bet with Sportsbet. The bet was a five selection, four leg multi bet which means that there was five separate, four leg combinations. Each combination had a stake of \$777 resulting in a total stake for the bet of \$3,885 (5 x \$777). Each leg selected by the complainant involved match betting on a number of the North American National Basketball Association matches to be played on 3 December 2019. The selections that were made by the complainant are highlighted below:
 - Utah v **Philadelphia**
 - Golden State v **Atlanta**
 - **Indiana** v Memphis
 - Chicago v **Sacramento**
 - New York v **Milwaukee**
9. Given the nature of an Exotic Multi Bet, the complainant's selections resulted in the following five separate, four leg combinations being in play (each with a stake of \$777):
 - Combination 1: Philadelphia, Atlanta, Indiana, Sacramento
 - Combination 2: Philadelphia, Atlanta, Indiana, Milwaukee
 - Combination 3: Philadelphia, Atlanta, Sacramento, Milwaukee
 - Combination 4: Philadelphia, Indiana, Sacramento, Milwaukee
 - Combination 5: Atlanta, Indiana, Sacramento, Milwaukee
10. At 1:24 pm on 3 December 2019, the complainant contacted Sportsbet by telephone to place another bet not related to this gambling dispute. After that bet was placed, the complainant made inquiries with Sportsbet about what the payout for the Exotic Multi Bet would be, should one of his selections (Sacramento) not be successful. The Commission has listened to this telephone call and it is clearly apparent to the

Commission that the complainant did not understand the complexities of the Exotic Multi Bet that he had placed nor how to correctly calculate the payout amount.

11. However, it is also clear to the Commission that the Sportsbet representatives that the complainant spoke to, were also not particularly confident in their ability to correctly calculate the potential payout amounts either. This is supported by Sportsbet's admission that the information given to the complainant on how the payout for the bet was to be calculated was incorrect. In this respect, the complainant was eventually incorrectly informed that to determine the payout, he should multiply each individual winning selection by \$777 and then add each payout together. The complainant then asked the Sportsbet representative that if Sacramento were to lose, whether he would receive "...about 5 grand" to which the Sportsbet representative replied, "*Yeah, I'm not sure exactly, but about that.*"
12. The complainant's Exotic Multi Bet was resulted at 2:56 pm on 3 December 2019 following each of the complainant's selections being successful excepting the result of the Chicago v Sacramento match in which the Chicago Bulls defeated the Sacramento Kings, 113 points to 106. This outcome resulted in each of the four combinations of the Exotic Multi Bet that included Sacramento, resulting as a losing combination.
13. The one successful combination of the complainant's Exotic Multi Bet that did not include Sacramento was Combination 2 with a payout of \$2,132.60 which the Commission confirms as the correct payout amount. Contrary to the advice Sportsbet initially provided to the complainant as to how to calculate the payout amount, when calculating the payout amount for an Exotic Multi Bet it is necessary to accumulate the odds on offer for each leg and multiply that by the stake for each of the successful combinations. By way of example, for the successful combination of the bet subject of this gambling dispute:
 - Leg 1 x Leg 2 x Leg 3 x Leg 4 x Stake = Payout
 - Philadelphia @ \$1.40 x Atlanta @ \$1.37 x Indiana @ \$1.35 x Milwaukee @ \$1.06 (equals \$2.744658) x Stake of \$777 = \$2,132.59927
14. At 2:58 pm shortly after the Exotic Multi Bet was resulted, the complainant contacted Sportsbet to query the payout amount given the advice that he had previously been provided with by Sportsbet. The Sportsbet representative that spoke with the complainant on this occasion appears to be quite familiar with how to correctly calculate the payout amount and explained how this was done to the complainant in what the Commission considers to have been a clear and easily understandable manner. It is clear again to the Commission having listened to this telephone conversation that the complainant at this point in time, still does not have an understanding of the complexity of the bet that he has placed and even queries the Sportsbet representative as to why would anyone place a bet of this nature.
15. The complainant asked Sportsbet to review the initial telephone conversation where he had been told of the incorrect method to calculate the payout amount and as a result at 3:46pm on the same day, a Sportsbet representative contacted the complainant and confirmed that the payout amount that had been resulted on the Exotic Multi Bet was correct and apologised for Sportsbet providing incorrect information as to how to calculate the bet during the earlier phone conversation and offered to credit the complainant's betting account with a bonus bet in support of this apology.

16. The complainant remained disgruntled and his tone of conversation and the language used in it became quite aggressive. To the credit of the Sportsbet representative, the Sportsbet representative remained calm and explained the bet that the complainant had placed to him in a very professional, clear and detailed manner. The Sportsbet representative also provided details of a website that complainant could access to assist him to calculate bets of this nature in the future. At 5:31 pm on the same day, the Sportsbet representative sent an email to the complainant with the details of the bet calculation website.
17. As detailed at paragraph 3, the complainant has further submitted that following receiving the incorrect advice from Sportsbet on how to calculate the potential payout for the Exotic Multi Bet, he placed a further ten bets based on that advice. The complainant has provided details of each of these bets to the Commission including the bet identification number, the stake placed and the time and date that he placed each bet.
18. In this respect, it is relevant to note that it is a requirement of all sports bookmakers licensed in the Northern Territory to maintain a secure, independent audit log that can be accessed by the Commission to review betting transactions. Upon a bet being struck with a sports bookmaker, the bet is also recorded in the audit logs of the Commission. Should the sports bookmaker attempt to change the bet recorded in their own audit logs there would be a clear discrepancy when compared to the Commission's audit log.
19. With respect to this gambling dispute, an officer from Licensing NT's Gambling Systems Unit reviewed data in relation to the ten bets that the complainant submitted were placed as a result of the incorrect payout advice being provided by Sportsbet. Noting that the complainant received the incorrect payout advice during the telephone call that commenced at 1:24 pm on 3 December 2019 and that the advice was corrected in the telephone call that commenced at 2:58 pm on 3 December 2019, for the complainant's submission to have any standing each of these ten bets would need to have been placed during the 1 hour and 34 minutes that existed between the initial telephone conversation where incorrect advice was provided and the telephone conversation where the advice was corrected.
20. The examination of the audit log revealed that of the ten bets that the complainant submitted were impacted by the incorrect advice, five of the bets were struck before the initial telephone conversation and a further three of these bets were struck after the telephone conversation in which the payout information was corrected and the complainant had been provided details of the bet calculation website.
21. The remaining two of the complainant's ten bets were placed during the period between the two telephone calls. The Commission notes that the stakes for these bets were \$200 and \$500 respectively and were both handicap bets involving the Chicago and Sacramento match. Of significance is that neither of these bets was a multi bet of any type and any advice received by the complainant from Sportsbet relating to exotic multi bet payouts cannot in the Commission's view, be claimed by the complainant to have influenced his decision to place either of these handicap bets.

Decision

22. The Commission is authorised following an investigation, to declare that disputed bets are lawful or not lawful. On the weight of evidence provided, the Commission is satisfied that each of the complainant's bets referred to in this decision notice were lawful bets pursuant to section 85(1A) of the Act.
23. The Commission is not satisfied that any of the bets placed by the complainant that are referred to in this decision notice were influenced or impacted upon by the incorrect payout advice initially provided to the complainant by Sportsbet and as such, the Commission is also satisfied that each of the complainant's bets were settled correctly.
24. The Commission is further satisfied that while the complainant may have received incorrect advice from Sportsbet as to the potential payout for the Exotic Multi Bet placed, the complainant placed this bet prior to receiving that incorrect advice and as such, the bet has been settled correctly and the complainant has received the appropriate amount of money payable on that winning lawful bet.
25. In order to reduce the possibility of a similar gambling dispute being lodged in the future, the Commission recommends that Sportsbet put in place appropriate training to ensure that each of its representatives that deals with customer interactions in relation to bet payout calculations is able to do so correctly. Should a bet payout calculation be of such a complex nature and or is still not well understood by the Sportsbet representative despite having received appropriate training, then the Commission expects that the customer's query would be referred to a more senior Sportsbet representative who can advise the customer as how to calculate a potential bet payout correctly.

Review of Decision

26. Section 85(6) of the Act provides that a determination by the Commission of a dispute referred to it pursuant to section 85 of the Act shall be final and conclusive as to the matter in dispute.



Alastair Shields

Chairperson
Northern Territory Racing Commission

7 June 2021