

The end of the line

GT ceases publication in print; will remain as website



gaming TODAY

news you can bet on

May 15, 2012 - May 21, 2012 - Vol. 37 No. 19 - \$1.95 - www.gamingtoday.com

Same as Derby
GT's Mark Roberts went right back to the Oracle for a new Freakness pick and Jay Hood came up with his prediction once he knew Union Regs was not headed to Prentiss.

On the Mark
by Mark Mayer

Dumb & Dumber
The New York Knicks were once my favorite NBA team. No more. How can you support stupidity? It's like the tale about how many people it takes to screw in a light bulb. In the case of the Knicks, the total number is too many to define. The latest feat was when celebrating a Game 4 victory over the Miami Heat as if going 1-3 down and instead of four and one was celebrated like winning the NBA title.

Is there Another?
All the great generals, all the top-notch political consultants and Wall Street types study history to guide to the future. If you go back over previous Freakness picks (see Looking Back, p.2), the winner this Sunday will be one of the horses that ran in the Kentucky Derby. There are several new shooters, but none with the credentials of I'll Have Another, Creative Cause or Bodemeister. All have proven they can compete at this level.

Getting Rich
by Richard Saver

The grounds crew sometimes bypasses the dirt course to make it lighter, faster to create some faster times, making it unfair. All we want was to have a flat and fair track.

O'Neill hits Pinlico.

GT SPECIAL EDITION

June 4, 2020 - June 9, 2020 • Vol. 45 No. 22 • \$1.95 • www.GamingToday.com • @GamingTodayNews

BACK IN BUSINESS!

D-lightful
It's the calm before the storm at the D Las Vegas as guests check into the hotel and get the LORNG BAQ five hours before the casino opens.

WE ARE OPEN

Sportsbooks in Vegas reboot p16

GT SUPER BOWL LV

February 3, 2021 - February 9, 2021 • Vol. 46 No. 6 • \$4 • www.GamingToday.com • @GamingTodayNews

GOAT vs. Baby Goat

Mahomes, Brady face off

Dink and Dunk
W.G. Ramirez

SUPER BOWL LV
Who: Kansas City Chiefs vs. Tampa Bay Buccaneers
When: Sunday, 3:30 p.m. PT
Where: Raymond James Stadium, Tampa, Fla.
TV: CBS
Line: Chiefs -3, Total 56

Sportsbook vets share Super Bowl bet stories p3

How do you say goodbye? I've been asking myself that question the past few weeks after learning that Gaming Today, which has been serving readers in Las Vegas and beyond for 45 years, had been sold.

And with that sale, comes change. The new owner will keep GT going, but strictly as a website. The print edition, which debuted on May 1, 1976 to coincide with the Kentucky Derby — won by

From the Editor

Steve Carp

@stevecarp56

Bold Forbes — concludes its run today with this issue.

I'm going to be perfectly honest. I thought we were doomed last March 17. Sports in America

had already stopped and casinos throughout Nevada were ordered shut by the governor in response to a virus that was growing in strength by the day, putting people in hospital ICUs and claiming lives.

But we had an angel who looked over us. Bill Paulos, our owner, kept us going. I've said it several times in this column and I'll say it one last time — thank you for not pulling the plug. He easily

could have called it quits in April when we couldn't publish a print edition, couldn't put a paper in a casino and could barely get anyone to advertise.

Instead, he wouldn't capitulate. And we bounced back, stronger than ever. Unfortunately, we're not as strong as the coronavirus. Like much of Las Vegas and so many businesses, we have struggled financially to stay afloat.

I can't be angry at Bill for sell-

ing GT. He is fortunate that someone thought we were valuable enough to purchase and he was able to recoup virtually all of his investment when he obtained the company back in July 2018 from Eileen DiRocco, whose late husband Chuck founded the paper.

I think Chuck would have liked the feistiness we displayed during the pandemic when we were strictly digital and available online.

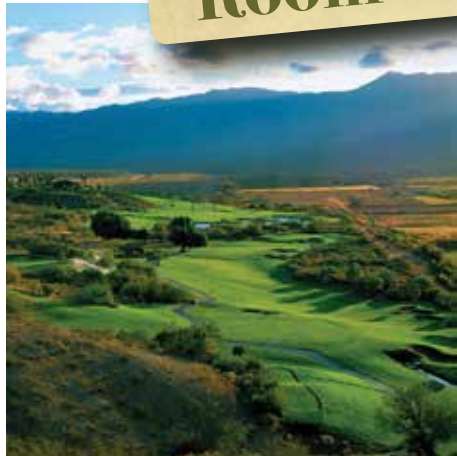
Please see Carp p3



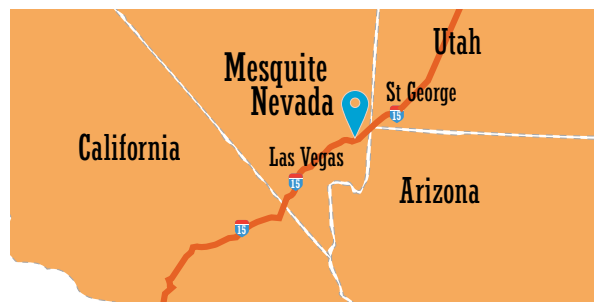
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Carp: It was an amazing experience

Continued from p1

Looking back, we did some of our best work during the months we were unable to produce a print edition.

To me, Gaming Today was always the people's paper. It was the place to go for news on sports betting, on horse racing, on what was going on in the industry. That was Chuck's vision and I'm proud to say we kept that vision going, though some people still come up to me and ask why did we ditch the 3 Girl?

I never thought I'd work here, much less serve as the editor. But newspapering is in my blood. It's all I've ever done. So after I had finished my Golden Knights book "Vegas Born," and Bill and Howard Barish, GT's general manager and managing editor, talked to me about coming on board late in September of 2018, I joined up.

Am I glad I did.

Not only did I get to help re-shape the paper and build on what Eileen had done, I got to re-connect with friends in the sports betting and casino industry, folks I had lost touch with over the years.

I also got to work with some talented writers, some who were already on the staff, others I was allowed to bring on board. Together we put out a hell of a product and I got to use my editing chops again after they'd been laid dormant for decades.

And our production staff were all-stars. They adjusted to new philosophies and new concepts. They breathed new life into the website. The paper's look was fresh and modern. We went from being strictly Vegas to a national publication. And it helped boost advertising sales as we jumped on the PASPA train and covered sports betting beyond Nevada.

The timing couldn't have been more perfect for a publication

like ours. Of course, the timing of COVID-19 during the middle of March Madness could not have been worse. Thus, as the headline indicates, we have reached the end of the line.

So, how do you say goodbye?

I'll try by starting to say thank you. Thanks to our awesome production staff — Lori Lewis, Amelia Stets, Hunter Lewis and Cindy Cariaga — for getting us out on deadline each and every week and making us look as good as we did while also maintaining the website and helping it remain fresh and current daily.

Thanks to Gabrielle Reisler, our dynamic sales manager who worked relentlessly and tirelessly to get people to part with their money and advertise with us.

Thanks to our printers and our delivery people who made sure the paper got to the casino every week. To Jim DeFreitas, our IT guy who saved my butt more than

once and made sure we were always good to go.

Thanks to all our writers — past and present. You were the heartbeat and face of Gaming Today. You were who the readers connected with.

Thanks to all the sportsbook managers and directors who worked with our writers and provided insight and quotes for their stories and participated in our Bookies Battle contest. Thanks to all the casinos who permitted us to be made available to their customers and for picking up the tab in order to do so.

Thanks to Howard and Bill, who thought enough of me and my abilities to come on board and hand me the keys to the car and guide it through those pothole-filled roads. I'll forever be grateful in your faith in me.

This has been a hell of a ride. I got to do things I never thought I'd do again. Like cover an NFL team.

Or continue to cover an NHL team. I even get to write again about UNLV sports, which was what initially brought me to Las Vegas back in 1988.

I'm going to miss a lot of things about Gaming Today. But what I'll probably miss the most was every Tuesday afternoon when Lori hit the button to send it to the printer knowing we had successfully produced another issue.

I have one last thank you — to our subscribers, our advertisers and all of our readers. Your patronage has meant so much to all of us and we are deeply indebted to you.

What's next for me? I'm not sure. I'm still going to be writing about the Golden Knights and the NHL at SinBin.Vegas so you can follow me there. As for everything else, well, let's not say goodbye. Goodbyes seem so permanent. Let's just say, until we meet again further on up the road.



TO A LEGENDARY PARTNER
IN THE SPORTS BETTING INDUSTRY



The Station Casinos Family

It's been a great 30-month ride

"Don't cry because it's over, smile because it happened."

As far as I'm concerned, this Theodor Geisel (aka Dr. Seuss) quote can never be overused. The message is so powerful, philosophical, and yet full of common sense.

What has felt like 10 years has truly been a memorable 30 months.

My first acknowledgment of gratitude is for my good friend Tom Jingoli, Executive Vice President & COO at Konami Gaming. Upon learning of Bill Paulos' acquisition of Gaming Today, Tom reached out to me and in his occasional coy manner said, "I may have something of interest for you."

I had recently finished up a 25-year career in the restaurant business working side by side with my father. We had a most memorable run. Our primary locations were located within casinos, and several adjacent to sportsbooks. Many of you may remember the Stage Delis in MGM Grand, Bally's and the Forum Shoppes at Caesars. Ironically this would become the impetus for my tenure at Gaming Today.

With regard to the aforementioned Mr. Paulos, a limit on word count and real estate in the print edition preclude me from all that I'd like to convey. At the urging of Jingoli, Bill and I met regarding his new acquisition. His intentions for GT were two-fold.

First, the repeal of PASPA (Supreme Court ruling ending the virtual Nevada monopoly on sports betting) three months earlier presented an opportunity to nationally scale a local, yet ultra-niche publication.


Second, Bill owns an established digital marketing company called Engaged Nation. The intent was to exploit synergies between the two companies. In a satisfying twist, we had begun to see the fruits of that intention recently materialize.

After a few discussions, Bill offered me the position of General Manager-Managing Editor. Given that I didn't have a background in media, I was grateful that he was betting on me based on other at-

tributes, namely the relationship network established in my first career along with a high energy approach.

GM's Take

Howard Barish

 @GamingTodayNews

For the tens of thousands who have had the privilege of working with Bill Paulos not only in Nevada, but from Michigan to Melbourne, they can tell us his mantra is literally "Let's f'n go!" This man has boundless energy and it most certainly trickles down the ranks of the organization.

What amazed me each day was that despite a phenomenally successful and long career in the casino business (you can look that up), Bill Paulos still loves working with people. This and his fierce loyalty to me and our staff are the traits I'll most remember. Thanks for your faith in our team.

Speaking of our staff, my words in this column won't do justice as to how I valued our time together. I most certainly will speak to each of you personally and express my gratitude.

It's become so cliché by sports commentators and journalists to use the term, "buying in." This player bought in or a team buys into a coaching philosophy. When we took over the operation at GT, Steve Carp, our senior editor, and I literally turned the place upside down. It was imperative that our team "bought-in." It wasn't always pleasant, but what's easy when you've got lofty goals?

We started with the print publication and completely revamped its look and style. This included the eventual phasing out of the "Page 3 girl." For those that don't know this component of GT, it was a young gal in scantily clad bikini. The caption might read, "When she isn't modeling, Ginger is a UNLV student by day and a part-time cocktail waitress at The Continental by night." We believed that segment had run its course especially when we in-



Photo from YouTube

Howard Barish did a regular horse racing selection video with Minty Bets.

tended to grow the publication in other states.

There were certainly phone calls and hate mail. My response was always "Sir, I can definitely recommend a few web sites where you can find this type of content." That always ended the conversation.

From there we tackled the future — the GT website. And with that comes another cliché that's overused these days. It had "great bones" as people sometimes refer to buildings. But it really did have a solid foundation.

A Don Best ticker provided scores and real-time lines from six Vegas sports books. The archive section was easy to navigate and there was a great area to view the actual newspapers in PDF form. The challenge was that it still reflected a weekly publication, not a 24/7 news and informational site.

This had to change, especially with the proliferation of sports betting and associated news from around the country. I'm most proud of our adaptation of the website while only adding one extra staff member. And with Mr. Paulos' urging, the website vastly improved at the outset of the coronavirus pandemic. It was quite a transition and yes, the team bought in.

Best wishes to new gaming-today.com owner Kendall Saville and his team at i15 Media. Thanks for identifying and continuing an iconic name in sports betting media.

To our group of independent writers, many whom I've never met in person because you're geo-

graphically scattered — a heartfelt thanks. The reality of 21st Century journalism is certainly more challenging than yesteryear. But your labor of love always showed up in the work.

Special thanks to Eileen DiRocco, former publisher of Gaming Today. Her and late husband Chuck created what was then the Sports Form in 1976. They were pioneers in sports betting and casino industry journalism.

I would also like to thank Jerry Epstein and Michael Paulos along with their team at Engaged Nation. We shared a building and these folks got to witness chaos on Tuesdays, our publishing day. Additional thanks to Mr. Paulos' longtime administrative assistant Diana Degarimore for her operational support


I'd be remiss if I didn't thank my family during the tenure at GT. My wife Randi along with sons Brett and Ryan who put up with me being connected to Twitter and our website for most waking hours. Also to my parents for their support and encouragement.

And last but certainly not least,

Disclaimer: Each *Gaming Today* writer uses the betting line available to him at the time he makes his selections, so you may see different lines on the same game throughout the paper. Writers' selections are a guide to their thinking on the game and their choice for a possible bet based on the line they had available.

our advertising partners, subscribers, and readers. Plain and simple, you were the reason we poured ourselves into the work at GT. Thanks for your trust and loyalty. Onward and upward.

GT GAMING TODAY

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Howard Barish

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Steve Carp

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Gabrielle Reisler

ADVERTISING SALES DIRECTOR

Lori Lewis

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Chuck DiRocco

FOUNDER (1935-2004)

Thank You



For 45 Years Of News We Could Bet On

From Your Friends At The

SOUTH POINT

Get Help • Give Help



Before COVID-19, more than 272,000 people in our community were food-insecure. Now, there are nearly 440,000 people who don't know where their next meal is coming from – that's one in five of our neighbors. Three Square is committed more than ever to ensuring that no one is hungry. For more information, visit threesquare.org.

Together, we are stronger. Together, we can feed everyone.



Three Square comes through

BY STEVE CARP

Every morning, Brian Burton wakes up to heartache.

He sees the long lines of cars, trunks ready to be opened so food can be placed inside. It's painful to watch. But when you're in a war, you learn to steel yourself and you move forward and battle the enemy. It's a fight you can't afford to lose.

Burton, the CEO of the Three Square food bank, is in a battle of food insecurity during the coronavirus pandemic. He, his staff and army of volunteers are on the front lines helping people who a year ago, or six months ago, could never have imagined needing assistance to feed themselves and their families.

"To see so many in the middle class, people who follow the rules, being put in this position, it's a shock to one's pride and dignity," he said. "Folks don't want to be in that line. It's painful to see."

But Burton lives in a community that is giving and caring. Part of that community is Bill Paulos, who has been a supporter of Three Square from the beginning 14 years ago and is donating half the gross proceeds from advertising sales for the final edition of Gaming Today, where he has served as publisher the past 2 1/2 years.

"We absolutely love it," Burton said of Paulos' gesture. "Gaming Today has had a five-decade commitment to Las Vegas and Bill Paulos has been here with us since our inception. We're very grateful for the support. It gives a psychological lift to our staff."

Paulos said it was important to

give back to the community.

"Las Vegas has been so good to me and my family," Paulos said. "Three Square does so much good for this community. One of my dearest friends is (Three Square board member) Diana Bennett. Diana brought me in to work with the food bank years ago. Diana put on these wonderful events at her house and we were like sergeants at arms to raise money at her events."

"When we were looking for something to do, my first call was to Diana. We worked out all the details and we're honored to be able to help."

"It is amazing that there are almost half a million people in this valley who are in need of food. That's one of the best things we can do — feed our children."

GT is just one of many companies that have stepped up in recent months to assist Three Square.

"It's been unbelievable," Burton said of the hotels and casinos that have donated food, money and manpower to help Three Square. "This community goes through economic shocks that entail long recovery. But they don't give up. It's staggering how many first-time donors come in and help."

Burton said there are numerous tales of generosity from those who can least afford it, yet feel obligated to help those in greater need than themselves.

"One lady brought \$45 to us and she said she had been in that food line and wanted to give back to us for helping her," he said. "It



Photo from Three Square

Three Square's volunteers put together food packages for those Las Vegas in need.

gets very emotional to me when I hear those stories. It shows what a special place Las Vegas is."

Burton is fortunate to have a staff that is indefatigable, that shows up every day, ready to work and do it with a smile and with great empathy.

"They've been such troopers," he said. "They take care of themselves and each other. They've given 110 percent. There is no 'woe is me.' Everyone understands the urgency of the moment. We've had no COVID outbreaks."

Urgency best describes the situation.

"We've had lines as long as four miles long back in April and May," Burton said. "And we've been seeing those long lines return. We'll serve as many as 500 cars a day and we have 15 locations where you can drive through and get assistance."

"We've got multiple lanes and it's a very efficient model. It doesn't seem like it ever moves but it actually does. And all of our interaction with the people we help is a dignified, warm one."

Three Square sources food to 185 separate charities in Southern

Nevada. And with 1 out of 5 people who live in the valley dealing with food insecurity, the task is a daunting one.

"It's a big number. It's larger than the population of Henderson," Burton said of the approximately 300,000 in need. "Sometimes those numbers lose their

meaning. But there hasn't been a sector of the community that hasn't gotten involved.

"The large gifts create swoon and move the ball down the field. But it's the small donations that are my favorite. These are the people living day-to-day yet they find a way to help."

I've been reading Gaming Today since the first edition in 1976.

Thanks for the memories, I'm going to miss you guys.

Roxy Roxborough



Photo from Three Square

CEO Brian Burton.

So many memories

In the beginning, just over 45 years ago, Gaming Today founder Chuck DiRocco and Eileen DiRocco unveiled news you can bet on with a weekly race and sports local paper called Sports Form that evolved into Gaming Today.


When I first started working at the Stardust in the early 80's there were two things that local gamblers waited for.

Horse bettors would congregate at a place called the Burger Hut that was located on Paradise Road next to the old Crazy Horse. A Damon Runyon character-proprietor a guy called Hershey knew everything and he had a phone growing out of his ear giving scores out. The Daily Racing Form was dropped off at the Burger Hut first and the race players were there to get them.

The second thing was Sports Form/Gaming Today.

Getting Rich with Saber

Richard Saber

 @RSaberGT



Early Tuesday mornings, Gaming Today would be dropped off at the sportsbooks throughout the city here in Las Vegas. We would put some on the counter for the players to grab and grab they did. Some would take three or four papers as they would mail them out to friends back home. We would always need to hide a few papers for the weekend.

Little did I know at the time that I would work for Gaming Today for over 20 years and what a great 20 years it has been.

When I first started it was as the parlay card manager. But after the parlay card season ended, I became Chuck DiRocco's runner. Chuck loved to bet the ponies along with Blackjack and he was very good at both and I loved making the bets for him.

As time went on, we were like family and I made some great lifelong



Richard Saber back in the day working in the sportsbook.

friends. Eileen DiRocco took over the reins of the paper along with her faithful dogs, who would be at the office with her. Eileen became like the sister that I never had and she was always there to help me with my problems.

I miss those early days and the friends

I was lucky to make. Lori Lewis, Ameila Stets, Mark Mayer, Ron Berger, David Stratton, Bob Mann, my parlay card side kick Jodie Kallio, Ray Poirier, Monti Rock and Gabby Reisler. We were family.

It was a great run and as Bob Hope would sing "Thanks for the memories."

Thanks for the **Memories.**

— *William* **HILL**

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Publisher reflects back on run

BY STEVE CARP

As Gaming Today's print edition comes to an end after 45 years, we talked to publisher Bill Paulos for his thoughts on his experience of owning a newspaper, growing it and trying to keep GT going during a pandemic.

GT: When you bought Gaming Today almost three years ago, what enticed you to buy a newspaper? You never owned a newspaper before.

BP: It was interesting. It was a newspaper that I was familiar with, back when it was called the Sports Form. I was a 29-year-old general manager at the Marina Hotel and I would sit down in the employees dining room and read the Sports Form.

Then I met Chuck DiRocco in 1983 when I was down in Laughlin building the Edgewater and the Colorado Belle. He was our disseminator for the tracks and we would go back and forth on the costs and the liability of the dissemination. As time went on, a few years ago, I sat down with Eileen DiRocco and we said that maybe there was a way it would fit in with our existing company, Engaged Nation. But the deal didn't work out.

A couple years later, it did work out. We wanted to do more on the digital side and the business model had to change. But we said, let's keep printing the newspaper and see if we could go national with it and do more things digitally with it.

We did. We were very successful. Then COVID hit. It decimated us and it made properties realize that things were going to have to change and they weren't going to be able to do handouts like they had before and people didn't want to touch anyone else's newspaper.

We had ascertained in our research that everybody who picked up a newspaper was read by five others. Without that circulation, advertising dries up pretty quickly.

GT: What was your vision for the print edition and the website?

BP: Our vision was to make it more of a newspaper and not just a throwaway. And we ran it like a newspaper, which we were

very successful at. We changed the look of the paper in November 2018 and advertising went up. And frankly, we did an amazing job on the website. The website went from virtually no eyes to over 100,000 page views a month.

GT: What was the biggest obstacle you had to overcome in getting your goals met?

BP: The biggest obstacle, I believe, was the cost of completely changing the business model. It was a very high cost to change it from what we were doing to what we wanted. By keeping the business model we had and increasing the value of our website, we partially met our goals but we didn't get there.

We were turning the corner and we were starting to gallop down the final stretch when COVID hit and it stopped us cold.

GT: Let's talk about last March. You had a very hard decision to make — fold Gaming Today or keep it going. You chose to keep it going. Why?

BP: We didn't know what the future was going to be. I didn't think COVID was going to last a year. We had employees and writers who depended on their jobs and what they did for Gaming Today.

So I made the decision to hold off and see what we could do and turn it around. Unfortunately, COVID lasted longer than I was able to.

The truth of the matter is with the sale, we got all our money back and everything's even. From a business perspective, it worked out. The sad thing is an icon in Las Vegas is no longer there and that's a shame. I didn't see an uptick in circulation for a very long time.

GT: Did the state of the casinos enter into your decision to sell?

BP: Absolutely. When the casinos reopened, many weren't willing or able to take the paper and that was obviously hard for us. Nationally, we were sending papers to Atlantic City, to Mississippi, to Pennsylvania. But they didn't want to take them and it pretty much made the decision for us.

When you look back on it, you had to do something. So when i15 Media called, they made a proposal, it was a proposal that made



Photo from Steve Carp

Bill Paulos, Gaming Today's third and final publisher.

sense for me business-wise and I could get out whole and also help those people who were working for us.

GT: You've owned so many businesses in your life. How does this one rank in terms of emotional investment and fun. Did you enjoy your experience as a publisher?

BP: Obviously, it was fun. Every business I've ever had, the energy of the business comes from the people who work in it. That was fun. Working with you guys, learning the business. That was fun.

You have to understand, you're looking at a guy from New York City who barely could complete a sentence without an expletive. And now, as a publisher of a newspaper, that's pretty heady stuff. So it was fun to do. How can you hate reading and writing about sports? It was insanely enjoyable.

GT: What will you miss the most about not being able to pick up that paper every Wednesday morning and going through it as you're drinking your coffee?

BP: Just the actual picking up the paper. I love Jack Sheehan's stories. The writers ... our sports-writers and guys who helped our readers with betting. They're all phenomenal. They didn't have great seasons every year with their picks, but they gave you the facts as they were out there.

There was no "Fake News" in Gaming Today.

GT: When you saw how it evolved from the old days, what did it mean to you?

BP: There's a tremendous amount of pride in the growth and the look of the paper and how it read. In my mind, it was a much more coherent assembly of sports news. That's what we were trying to accomplish when we changed it in 2018.

We believe we accomplished it. The response from our readers was tremendous. Our circulation was at its highest ebb, everything was going great until our friend, COVID-19 hit. We just took the hit. Unfortunately, it's one of those

scenarios no one saw coming. We thought we were going to ride the wave of the growth of sports betting but we were unable to stay with it.

One of our scenarios was everyone knew Gaming Today as the Las Vegas newspaper. Trying to get past that feel, we hired guys from the Midwest and from the East. In hindsight, we probably should have done more of that. But the expansion was so quick, there were so many states, it was tough for us to keep up.

GT: Any final thoughts about being a publisher?

BP: It's a heady thing. I didn't buy the newspaper to put my ideas over or try and have an agenda. I wanted a good sports newspaper. I wanted to make it better than it was. We had some things we were going to do which just didn't evolve for one reason or another.

I'll certainly miss the day-to-day activity with the employees of the newspaper. The quality was second to none. We had a Hall of Fame editor. We had a tremendous general manager (Howard Barish). We had people who had been with the paper almost since the beginning.

So it was wonderful to be able to continue what Chuck DiRocco had started. Chuck was a bon vivant. He was certainly a player. He loved the horses and playing Blackjack. He hit every casino every night to see what was going on in the city.

Our focus was much more on sports betting. It was more of a B to C business than a B to B to C business. PASPA changed everything, 100 percent.

All the properties who advertised with us over the years, those who are advertising with us in this, our final edition, it's been heartwarming. They understand that half of the gross is going to the (Three Square) food bank. Obviously, everyone knows that Las Vegas is going through some very hard times and anything we can do to help is just a positive.

It's a sign of the times. I think i15 Media will do a fine job with their business model and the name "Gaming Today" will go on.



Red was added to the mix

1983



A new logo and real color on 4 pages

2000



1976

Chuck DiRocco launches Sports Form



1993

Gaming Industry News "Rosebuds and Pipes"



2004

Eileen DiRocco becomes publisher

Fun ads



Girls, Girls, Girls!



Eileen took the issue upside down

2016

A new look and logo

2012

End of the line

2021

SlotsToday
News You Can Use

Low down on lay bets
Players like the true odds of craps lay bets

Bad beat poker jackpot hits for \$411K
Station pays largest ever bad beat pot

Showin' off for the home folks!
Good poker might ease their fears

The Undeniable Truth

Also... Poker Tables and Keno

Get the most from a hot machine!

Never discount the power of probability!

Play your cards right!

Play your cards right!

Play your cards right!

GT GAMING TODAY
OVER 40 YEARS OF NEWS YOU CAN BET ON!

ESPN's Van Pelt gets betting

By DAVID DYE
Scott Van Pelt was on the air yesterday talking about sports betting, but he was talking about a different kind of betting. Van Pelt said "I haven't been right about everything in my life, but I was right to bet on the Super Bowl."

Van Pelt, considered by many to be the most respected sports analyst on ESPN, was on the air during a recent broadcast of the Super Bowl. Van Pelt's perspective on the game was widely respected by fans and analysts alike. Van Pelt's prediction of the Patriots to win the Super Bowl was one of the few correct predictions he has made in his career.

Van Pelt's prediction was based on his analysis of the Patriots' defense, which he believed was the key to their success. Van Pelt's prediction was also based on his belief that the Patriots would be able to overcome the Chiefs' offense. Van Pelt's prediction was also based on his belief that the Patriots would be able to overcome the Chiefs' defense.

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At Gaming Today, we continue to evolve

By now, you've noticed the recent changes that have been made to Gaming Today. From the look to the content, we're continuing to evolve. We're adding new content, we're adding new features, we're adding new products, we're adding new services, we're adding new people. We're adding new things. We're adding new things. We're adding new things.

From the Editor
Steve Carg

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Bad beat poker jackpot hits for \$411K
Station pays largest ever bad beat pot

Las Vegas, Nev. (Gaming Today) — A bad beat poker jackpot of \$411,000 was paid out at the Flamingo Las Vegas on Monday night. The jackpot was won by a player who had a pocket pair of aces and was dealt a pocket pair of aces on the flop. The player was dealt a pocket pair of aces on the flop and a pocket pair of aces on the flop. The player was dealt a pocket pair of aces on the flop and a pocket pair of aces on the flop.

The jackpot was won by a player who had a pocket pair of aces and was dealt a pocket pair of aces on the flop. The player was dealt a pocket pair of aces on the flop and a pocket pair of aces on the flop. The player was dealt a pocket pair of aces on the flop and a pocket pair of aces on the flop.

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Paris (oooh la la!) wins Bookies Battle

BY DAVID DYE
Paris, France, has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl. Paris has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl. Paris has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl. Paris has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl.

Paris, France, has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl. Paris has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl. Paris has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl. Paris has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl.

2006

Paris, France, has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl. Paris has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl. Paris has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl. Paris has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl.

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Florida teams sized up

Teddy's Week 1 take

Christ on AFC West

Vegas Sports Books

2018

Paris, France, has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl. Paris has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl. Paris has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl. Paris has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl.

GT SUPER BOWL LV
GOAT vs. Baby Goat

February 3, 2021 - February 9, 2021 - Vol. 46 No. 6 - \$4 - www.gamingtoday.com

Whom Kimmie Co. Chiefs vs. Tampa Bay Buccaneers

Whom Sunday, 3:20 pm FT

Where Raymond James Stadium, Tampa, Fla.

TV: CBS

Line: Chiefs -3, Total 56

Table matters!
Automated BJ tables scrutinized

Popularity of '21' may be fading

Kerry Packer was last of a breed
The ultimate whale was a Vegas regular

Bad Beat's good news for players

Downloadable slots could debut in NV

Native casino reach new heights

Slays makers

Slays winners

Slays winners

Slays winners

Slots Today as a cover from the back

Paris, France, has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl. Paris has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl. Paris has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl. Paris has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl.

Future is NOW!
5 rookie QB's start in opener

A Giant battle

Rookie refs most annoying

NFL debuts

Wilson

Weeden

Tannehill

Bill Paulos buys GT

Paris, France, has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl. Paris has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl. Paris has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl. Paris has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl.

Sportsbook vets share Super Bowl bet stories p3

Paris, France, has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl. Paris has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl. Paris has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl. Paris has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl.

We didn't forget

Paris, France, has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl. Paris has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl. Paris has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl. Paris has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl.

Baseball's back

Paris, France, has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl. Paris has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl. Paris has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl. Paris has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl.

Celebrating Derby

Paris, France, has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl. Paris has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl. Paris has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl. Paris has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl.

Tiz time to run for roses

Paris, France, has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl. Paris has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl. Paris has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl. Paris has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl.

Stevens sticks with his contests

Paris, France, has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl. Paris has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl. Paris has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl. Paris has won the bookies' battle in the Super Bowl.

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We remember Oct. 1, 2017

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Batter Up!
Long-awaited MLB season set to begin

Inside the Park

Glad to be back

NFL offers to cancel preseason p3

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Tiz time to run for roses
Belmont winner tries to add Derby to resume

Lindo Report

Tiz the Law will be heavily favored to win Saturday's Kentucky Derby

Stevens sticks with his contests

NFL teams face questions p9

GT's Bookies Battle winners year by year

Year	Casino	Contestant	Record
1980	Churchill Downs	Don Caley	118-105
1981	Silverbird	Lou Kopple	120-101
1982	Harolds Club	Chris McKenney	46-35
1983	The King & Gambling Hall	Vince DiMare	120-98
1984	Desert Inn	Hayward Eddington	123-98
1985	MGM Grand Reno	Gary Ramociotti	122-104
1986	Fremont	Kenny White	129-89
1987	Barbary Coast	Jerry Ludt	125-85
1988	Bally's Reno	John Falenski	118-91
1989	Marina Hotel Casino	Ranse Brown	130-90
1990	Tropicana	Dolores Cogdill	129-87
1991	Riviera	Jack Lysaght	134-86
1992	Ballys	John Avello	131-90
1993	Hyatt Regency	Bill Knight	137-85
1994	Boulder Station	Dale Crandel	126-94
1995	The Horseshoe	Nick Bogdanovich	143-97
1996	Arizona Charlies	Robert Jaynes	137-103
1997	Caesars Palace	Rich Baccellieri	139-101
1998	Santa Fe	Steve Klein	141-99
1999	Showboat	Bruno Sciotto	145-87
2000	Regent	Jack Love	144-100
2001	Venetian	Rob Akers	154-93
2002	Barbary Coast	Johnny Spot	152-103
2003	Aladdin	Casey Maloni	156-98
2004	Barbary Coast	Johnny Spot	157-99
2005	Paris Las Vegas	Burt Groner	154-102
2006	Leroy's	Bob Smith	150-106
2007	Fiesta Rancho	Vinny Sanzare	146-110
2008	Green Valley Ranch	Kelly Downey	137-119



BOOKIE BATTLE WINNER – Kenny White, right, Fremont Hotel Casino sports writer, shows off (and with a great deal of pride) his selections to sportsbook manager Jeff Garrett, left, and general manager Steve Thompson.

Year	Casino	Contestant	Record
2009	Fiesta Rancho	Josh Pool	143-113
2010	Palace Station	Zach Goldberg	144-108
2011	Cannery	Joe Porrello	145-111
2012	Cannery	Joe Porrello	152-104
2013	Green Valley Ranch	Bert Cirincione	145-111
2014	Arizona Charlies West	Kitt Langvad	143-112
2015	Harrah's	Jack Frost	143-113
2016	South Point	Tom Blazek	155-99
2017	Boulder Station	Jackson Meeker	145-111
2018	Circus Circus	Ric Baum	143-113
2019	Aria	Jason Halpin	146-110
2020	The Mirage	Randy Madayag	146-106

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To our friends at Gaming Today,

Congratulations on a great run. We appreciate all you've done for the Las Vegas community and industry and have cherished our partnership over the years.



MGM RESORTS

Execs say goodbye

GT STAFF

As Gaming Today's print edition comes to an end, we reached out to casino owners and longtime Las Vegas sportsbook executives for their thoughts and memories.

For all of them, picking up GT every week was part of their routine and more often than not, extra papers would be required at their establishments to satisfy the demand of their customers who would quickly snatch up that week's edition.

Here are some of their thoughts as they bid farewell:

A Vegas institution

I can't imagine not having a weekly Gaming Today print edition in my office and for distribution to our casino and race and sports guests.

From the early days of the Sports Form in the late 1970's, to the modern Gaming Today, I have always looked forward to reading. The paper was a great tool to keep current on sports and gaming developments and Las Vegas contests and promotions.

Our guests could frequently be seen waiting for delivery to access valuable handicapping opinions and observations from some of the best.

I was fortunate enough to know the original Sports Form owners and editors Chuck and Eileen DiRocco, and recent owners and editors Bill Paulos, Howard Barish and Steve Carp, and many of the talented participating writers. It has been an honor to do business together, and the friendships and mutual respect go well beyond business.

From the early days to the current; congratulations on a job well done!

— **Art Manteris, VP Race and Sports, Station Casinos**

Good travel companion

In the 1980's when catching a flight from Detroit to Las Vegas, I always looked forward to my connection at Midway airport as I knew I could get my current issue of Gaming Today. That week's edition kept me busy on the Chicago

to Las Vegas leg as I read it cover to cover.

Without question, Gaming Today was THE source for the inside scoop on Las Vegas and in particular, the sports betting world. From Chuck DiRocco to Lem Banker to the Battle of the Bookies in more recent years, the influence of the Gaming Today on the Las Vegas visitor, and myself in particular, can't be understated.

— **Derek Stevens, CEO Circa Resort and Casino**

The industry leader

I have been in the business for 35 years and remember back when it was called Sports Form before changing to Gaming Today. It has always been very popular with both the bettors in front of the counter and with those within the industry behind the counter.

People would come in specifically the day we would get the new edition just to pick one up. For all that time, it has always been very informative with handicapping information, great columnists, informative stories, and even



Photo from Circa Resort

Circa's Derek Stevens has been a longtime reader.

restaurant reviews. And of course, the ever popular Page 3 Girl.

The Bookies Battle, a long-running tradition, has always been a staple of the football season and created a lot of fun between the contestants. I was a contestant a few years, and actually had the lead going into the last week once before getting beat out.

It was amazing how many people would comment to me about being on top of or close to the top all season long. That contest

draws a lot of attention from customers and those in the industry. I work side by side with this year's winner Randy Madayag, and it is truly an honor to win that contest, as he has received a lot of recognition for doing so.

Gaming Today will be missed in the books as it was such a constant all these years. The staff has always been first class and a pleasure to deal with and I wish them continued success in the future.

Please see Goodbye p15



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Photo from Mark Mayer

MGM's Jeff Stoneback and Jay Rood from 2015.

Goodbye: Thanks and well wishes

Continued from p14

Picking that paper up and having it around the office for all to read will truly be missed

— **Jeff Stoneback, Director, BetMGM Nevada**

Paper like no other

I have read your great publication from a guy named Chuck DiRocco and have not missed an article since then.

From Sports Form to Gaming Today, you guys gave gaming insight like no other. You will be missed.

— **Jimmy Vaccaro, VP sports-book operations, South Point**

A great relationship

Ever since I can remember, Gaming Today was a staple in our industry. I was certainly saddened to hear the news but we all understand the changes we're facing during these times.

I've had a lot of personal relationships over the last three decades with many of the writers/reporters from GT. I want to thank those great people and GT for all they did for our industry.

In addition, we give them a lot of credit for the success we enjoyed during the early years of our careers. Almost weekly they covered our offerings at the Imperial Palace and we certainly benefited from the publicity.

From the "Bookies Battle", to "On the Fly", to the "Page 3 Girl," there are numerous memories. GT was like our neighborhood watchdog. They shared the happenings that was taking place in our Gaming world. We sourced GT to keep our finger on the Industry pulse. We were able to monitor competition, review promos, and even make fun of each other on some of our quotes.

GT might not be around in hard copy but we do hope they live on in the digital world. Wednesdays will never be the same.

— **Jay Kornegay, Vice President, Westgate Las Vegas SuperBook**

Need to know

I remember the first time I came across Sports Form in 1977. While

having a bite with my uncles at Jasper Speciale's Tower of Pizza on The Strip, I was studying the Racing Form and one of my uncles was reading Chuck DiRocco's 'Heard On The Strip' column. I remember him bellowing out loud, "This guy DiRocco has some kind of sources!"

And so it was for decades; Chuck's 'Pipes' were one of the main reasons that made Sports Form/Gaming Today more of a must-read on Wednesdays than the Las Vegas Review Journal, Las Vegas Sun and L.A. Times. I read it on my breaks at The Royal Inn and Barbary Coast.

One of my responsibilities during my times at Caesars Palace and later Wynn Las Vegas was to make sure that a dozen copies of Gaming Today were delivered to the executive offices as soon as they arrived. Upper management always wanted to know if Chuck had a take on them or the property.

Since Chuck's passing in 2004, Eileen DiRocco and Bill Paulos have kept all of us informed about the industry we love. Personally, I'm grateful to them and their staff for including me in their coverage over the course of my career. From Chuck, Eileen and Ray Poirier to Steve Carp, Howard Barish, Rob Miech and the entire GT staff, my thanks and best wishes for the future. Wednesdays won't be the same.

— **Vinny Magliulo, Gaughan Sports/Las Vegas Dissemination Company**

The Vegas standard

The Sports Form, and later, Gaming Today, has been the standard in Las Vegas even before I moved here in 1979. Over the years, it has become more creative and prolific with content.

The Bookies Battle Contest, for years, has placed the price-makers in a keep-it-to-yourself, trash-talking challenge.

I'd like to thank a couple of guys no longer with us — Chuck DiRocco and Ray Poirier — for their insight on what simulcast racing would mean for Nevada.

It's meant a lot. Thanks a million. The very best of luck to the new



Photo from Chuck DiRocco

John Bennett pointing to his article in Sports Form.

ownership.

— **Johnny Avello, Director Race and Sports Operations, DraftKings**

Mine of information

I remember the first edition of Sports Form in 1976. Most readers

were looking for winners. John Bennett, my old Boss at the Rose Bowl Race Book, was on a college hoops roll of a lifetime on the front page each week. But for me and others in the industry, we were looking for news about race and sportsbooks which heretofore was uncovered by the local media.

And ever since, Gaming Today has played a role in tearing off the mask of secrecy about the race and sportsbook business and the colorful people that have played their part in Las Vegas history.

— **Michael "Roxy" Roxborough**

A 'must read'

Gaming Today has been an integral part of the scene in Las Vegas for as long as I can remember. For many years, I would make sure to pick up a copy if I saw it in the book.

There was a period of time during which I boycotted Gaming Today, but, under Bill Paulos' ownership, it is ending its run in the race and sportsbooks across the city at the top of its game.

— **Joe Asher, CEO William Hill US**



Are Rams next Bucs?

On Jan. 18, the Westgate Las Vegas SuperBook released its odds for Super Bowl LVI in 2022 in Inglewood, Calif.

The Kansas City Chiefs were favored at 6-1 odds, with Green Bay and Buffalo close behind at 10-1 and Baltimore, New Orleans, and Tampa Bay next at 12-1.

A little more than 12 hours after Tom Brady won his seventh Lombardi Trophy, thanks to the Buccaneers' suffocating defense that stymied the Chiefs 31-9 in Super Bowl LV, the odds were updated swiftly. Kansas City is now 5-1 while defending champion Tampa Bay is alone as the second choice at 8-1.

This interesting pandemic of a season may be over, and I certainly hope we never have to endure such a thing again. So as we put a wrap on things, it's certainly never too soon to look ahead with an intriguing offseason forthcoming, be it free agency (which kicks off March 17), the NFL Draft, and suddenly before you know it, OTA's.

With close to half of the league's 32 teams carrying storylines surrounding the arguably the most important position in any sport, I won't waste space in my final column for Gaming Today on QBs.

Don't get me wrong, I remain intrigued on whether or not Deshaun Watson and Derek Carr will have new zip codes from a local standpoint. My opinion, unless the Raiders receive an incredible deal without losing much more than

Carr, he's staying.

Personally, I'd rather talk about the team I think is worth the hard-earned cash you made betting

Dink and Dunk

W.G. Ramirez



@WillieGRamirez

the Buccaneers on the money line after I delivered the goods for a second straight year in the Super Bowl. Sure, the Chiefs and Bucs will be there next year contending; but forget those low odds.

You saw what Todd Bowles' defense did with the Bucs, right? Well, at 8-1 odds to win the NFC, and 16-1 odds to win the Super Bowl, the Los Angeles Rams are a team carrying solid value heading into the offseason. They boast the NFL's Defensive Player of the Year in Aaron Donald, who led a unit that allowed a league-low 4,511 yards in the regular season and limited opponents to scoring on 27.9% of their drives, tops in the NFL.

The Rams landed Matthew Stafford, and they have a little more than a month to do some finagling with their salary cap, something I expect them to work out before the official start of next season, March 17.

Stafford brings an entirely different package to Los Angeles'

backfield, where his physical presence has to have coach Sean McVay excited about his playmaking ability alone. Jared Goff somewhat kept the Rams limited with what they could do, which is why they ranked 13th in the league with 4,014 yards passing and scored on a dismal 34.2% of their offensive drives, eighth worst in the league.

Some perspective: Kansas City (4,854) and Tampa Bay (4,626) ranked No. 1 and 2 in passing yards and were third (47.9%) and sixth (47.8%) in drives ending in a score, respectively.

Further, Goff threw 20 touchdowns vs. 13 interceptions, while Stafford threw 26 TDs vs. 10 picks. Now imagine the roles reversed on their new teams, when you figure the Lions' offensive line allowed a sack on a league 11th-worst 6.7% of the time a pass was attempted. The Rams allowed a sack on a league sixth-best 4.1% of the time.

Fact is, when you look at comparisons between Stafford and Goff, the numbers are glaring on how they performed. When you factor in team analytics and see the Lions (5-11) fared better overall with a worse team than the Rams (10-6) because of what Stafford created, it's scary to think what he will do for Los Angeles when its stifling defense continues to



Photo from USA Today

Tom Brady may have to beat Rams to return to Super Bowl.

provide opportunity after opportunity by stopping the opposition.

In case you're looking for some value in next year's Super Bowl — to be played at SoFi Stadium — get yourself a little something on the Rams. After seeing the Bucs win in their partially filled stadium in this year's Super Bowl, I can only imagine Los Angeles getting to the final Sunday next season in jam-packed SoFi.

Finally, one day shy of my two-year anniversary of writing for all of you wonderful readers, I thank you for your time each week. I hope you've enjoyed the insight,

hope you had some fun reading about baseball, football, a little basketball here and there, some old Vegas tales mixed in, and the overall vibe editor Steve Carp, general manager Howard Barish and owner-publisher Bill Paulos thought you'd like when bringing me aboard.

From my section in the publication I've known since I was a kid, then known as the Sports Form, and now scribe for in its final edition as Gaming Today, I bid you adieu and wish you best of luck at the window.

Final season record: 56-54-1

Bookies Battle Playoff Edition Final Standings



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CONTESTANT

RECORD

Baldini's	Robert Kowalski	7-6
Gold Strike Tunica	Art Heun	7-6
Harrah's Hoosier	John Lindheimer	5-8
Mandalay Bay	Mike Piranio	6-7
Mirage	Randy Madayag	8-5
Red Rock Casino	Jason McCormick	9-4
Suncoast	Mike Lewis	4-9
Sunset Station	Chuck Esposito	5-8
Wildfire Boulder	Michael Smoller	9-4
William Hill	Nick Bogdanovich	7-6
CONSENSUS		7-6

Station's bookies tie

GT STAFF

It's a tie!

Gaming Today's Bookies Battle Special Playoff Edition came down to two Station Casino employees — Michael Smoller of the Wildfire Boulder and Jason McCormick of Red Rock Resort. Both finished 9-4 after McCormick pulled even with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers winning the Super Bowl on Sunday (Smoller had selected the Kansas City Chiefs).

But even the tiebreaker — Best Bet selections — was tied as both McCormick and Smoller had an identical record there.

The duo split the \$500 prize that was to go to the winner of the 10-contestant field.

"It was my first time in the contest and it was a good ride," Smoller said. "I'm glad to have represented Station Casinos and to share the honor with Jason.

"I had such a good first week in the playoffs. I thought I had a good shot to win it. Unfortunately, the Chiefs didn't play a good game and the better team won."

McCormick said: "I caught fire after wild card weekend riding the Bucs to the finish. I'm very proud to share this win with Michael."

Randy Madayag of the Mirage, who won the regular season Bookies Battle contest, finished third at 8-5. Baldini's Robert Kowalski, William Hill's Nick Bogdanovich and Gold Strike Tunica's Art Heun were next, all at 7-6.

Smoller said he plans to donate his winnings to charity. McCormick is going to do the same with his winnings through Smoller.

"We have a relationship with Whitney Elementary School," he said of the Boulder Wildfire. "I'm going to donate what I won to them. It's for a good cause to help kids and the school."

ASG would be a mistake

The NBA's plan to play a shortened 72-game regular season due to COVID-19 considerations is encountering hiccups and the league is facing challenges to fully accomplish that goal.

Roughly 25 games have already been postponed and need to be rescheduled, yet the NBA and the Players Association have announced plans to hold an All-Star Game in Atlanta on March 7. There are also considerations to have a full-fledged weekend of festivities.


Despite the union's approval many players, including some major stars, have voiced strong objections. And their objections are understandable given all the protocols that have been put in place in addition to the players having had a shortened offseason.

They were looking ahead to the scheduled five-day break in the season — a break that potentially could have been used to make up some of the postponed games

with the season already scheduled to end shortly before the still-planned Tokyo Olympics.

Bettin' on B-Ball

Andy Iskoe

 @vegasandy711



Most teams will have played a third of their schedule by this weekend. Enough games have been played to get a sense of which teams are not just playoff contenders, but who can be considered legitimate NBA Title contenders.

As of Monday at the Westgate Las Vegas SuperBook, the Lakers remained the overwhelming 7-5 favorites with Brooklyn a distant second at 5-1. Next, at 6-1, are the Clippers. There's little question that the Nets are loaded but

should they be favored more than the preseason favorite to emerge from the East, Milwaukee? The Bucks are currently 10-1 to win the title.

Two teams that are reasonably priced that have seen their odds drop since the season started present intriguing possibilities. In the East, Philadelphia, which was 30-1 when the future book opened, are currently down to 12-1. In the West, Utah is currently 14-1 after opening 40-1.

After going through "the process" for several seasons more than expected the 76ers seek a fourth straight trip to the playoffs with a solid roster. The Jazz seek a fifth straight trip.

Because of the tougher competition in the West a play on Philadelphia to win the East (+375) and the NBA Finals may have a better chance to cash than would a similar play on Utah. If both Joel Embiid and Ben Simmons can



Photo from AP Photos

LeBron James isn't crazy about playing All-Star Game.

stay healthy the Sixers should be a tough out in the playoffs.

Before getting to selections for the next few nights, I want to express my thanks and gratitude to all of the readers over the more than 20 years of writing for Gaming Today. It has been a privilege and a pleasure to share my weekly insights, selections and observations with you in my NFL, NBA and MLB columns.

And I thank those of you who reached out to me with comments, suggestions, questions and the like. I've made many friendships over the years as a result of these connections and our mutually shared passion of sports and sports betting. Here's wishing all of us happiness and success in the years ahead.

Wednesday

Raptors at Wizards: This is a tough spot for Washington, which is back home after playing four straight road games. It's their sixth game in an eight-day stretch that included two sets of back-to-back contests.

Toronto is in the fifth of a six-game road trip that ends Thursday in Boston, making this the more winnable of the two. After starting 2-8 the Raptors have gone 8-5, including a three-game losing streak immediately followed by a three-game win streak.

Washington remains a team in transition while Toronto continues to advance up the standings as they seek an eight straight playoff appearance. **RAPTORS.**

Thursday

76ers at Trail Blazers: This is a quick rematch after Portland won

in Philly last Thursday as 10-point road underdogs.

Both teams were missing key players due to injury. Portland's CJ McCollum remains sidelined while teammate Damian Lillard returned for Portland's next game at New York but was still dealing with abdomen issues.

Philly star Ben Simmons returned from a calf injury with a solid effort against the Nets. The Sixers continue to lead the Eastern Conference at 17-7 and likely comes as short road favorites here. **76ERS**

Friday

Bucks at Jazz: Utah remains the hottest team in the NBA, with the league's best record (19-5) and winners of 15 of 16 through Monday. The Bucks sit second in the East and appear over a 2-4 slump with four straight wins and covers. Each win was by 18 points or more albeit against the best competition.

Milwaukee started the calendar year winning seven of eight with the lone loss a 131-118 home loss to Utah as six-point chalk. Utah shot over 50% for the game including 25 of 53 on three pointers.

The Jazz and Bucks have split their two-game series each of the past three seasons. The Jazz should be favored and, if so, this will be Milwaukee's first game as an underdog this season.

This is a good test for Milwaukee as they seek to avenge a loss against one of the two elite teams to defeat them this season (the Lakers were the other). **BUCKS**

Last week: 1-2
Season: 12-12



NBA Records and Scoring Averages

c/o Andy Iskoe

TEAM	S/U			ATS			OV			HOME			ROAD						
	W	L	P	W	L	P	OV	UN	P	HW	HL	PF	PA	MRGN	RW	RL	PF	PA	MRGN
Boston	12	10	0	12	10	0	11	11	0	5	3	111.8	107.4	4.4	7	7	110.5	110.3	0.2
Brooklyn	14	11	0	10	15	0	18	7	0	10	5	120.2	115.5	4.7	4	6	123.4	122.3	1.1
New York	11	14	0	12	13	0	8	17	0	5	6	103.5	104.7	-1.2	6	8	102.1	103.6	-1.5
Philadelphia	17	7	0	13	9	2	13	11	0	11	2	118.4	112.4	6.0	6	5	109.0	107.5	1.5
Toronto	11	13	0	10	14	0	14	10	0	6	5	109.6	106.5	3.1	5	8	116.5	115.7	0.8
Chicago	9	14	0	13	10	0	12	11	0	3	8	110.0	114.8	-4.8	6	6	118.6	116.6	2.0
Cleveland	10	15	0	10	15	0	9	15	1	7	7	108.1	111.4	-3.3	3	8	98.6	108.9	-10.3
Detroit	5	18	0	11	10	2	13	10	0	4	7	106.9	107.5	-0.6	1	11	109.8	119.2	-9.4
Indiana	12	12	0	11	13	0	14	10	0	7	8	113.8	112.1	1.7	5	4	111.9	111.6	0.3
Milwaukee	16	8	0	13	11	0	14	10	0	9	2	122.5	109.0	13.5	7	6	120.3	113.4	6.9
Atlanta	11	12	0	12	11	0	7	16	0	6	7	110.6	110.0	0.6	5	5	115.1	112.5	2.6
Charlotte	12	13	0	14	10	1	12	13	0	7	7	110.1	108.8	1.3	5	6	111.9	112.5	-0.6
Miami	9	14	0	8	14	1	11	12	0	6	7	107.5	109.5	-2.0	3	7	107.0	112.4	-5.4
Orlando	9	15	0	10	14	0	12	11	1	5	8	104.0	110.8	-6.8	4	7	106.3	113.8	-7.5
Washington	6	15	0	9	12	0	11	10	0	2	7	121.3	125.2	-3.9	4	8	108.2	116.2	-8.0
Dallas	11	14	0	10	15	0	12	13	0	4	7	110.5	117.0	-6.5	7	7	111.8	111.0	0.8
Houston	11	12	0	10	13	0	7	15	1	5	5	107.8	106.2	1.6	6	7	112.2	111.8	0.4
Memphis	9	10	0	9	9	1	8	10	1	3	7	105.2	111.0	-5.8	6	3	115.2	110.4	4.8
New Orleans	10	12	0	10	12	0	13	8	1	6	5	115.5	113.1	2.4	4	7	107.5	111.5	-4.0
San Antonio	14	10	0	14	10	0	11	13	0	7	7	110.2	113.0	-2.8	7	3	112.0	109.0	3.0
Denver	12	11	0	10	13	0	16	7	0	5	6	115.9	114.4	1.5	7	5	114.7	111.1	3.6
Minnesota	6	18	0	12	11	1	11	13	0	4	7	106.5	111.9	-5.4	2	11	108.4	118.6	-10.2
Oklahoma City	10	13	0	12	10	1	12	11	0	3	8	107.5	118.2	-10.7	7	5	107.8	110.3	-2.5
Portland	12	10	0	10	12	0	12	10	0	5	5	112.4	116.5	-4.1	7	5	117.0	115.9	1.1
Utah	19	5	0	17	6	1	10	14	0	9	2	114.8	104.2	10.6	10	3	113.8	107.0	6.8
Golden State	12	12	0	12	12	0	11	13	0	8	5	114.8	108.6	6.2	4	7	112.9	120.0	-7.1
LA Clippers	17	8	0	14	11	0	14	10	1	8	4	114.7	109.1	5.6	9	4	114.9	106.7	8.2
LA Lakers	19	6	0	12	13	0	9	16	0	7	4	118.2	110.4	7.8	12	2	109.1	100.6	8.5
Phoenix	14	9	0	14	9	0	9	14	0	7	4	111.3	105.1	6.2	7	5	108.5	108.8	-0.3
Sacramento	12	11	0	13	10	0	14	9	0	7	6	115.0	120.5	-5.5	5	5	112.1	115.3	-3.2

Copyright 2021 by Andy Iskoe. The above chart shows each team's Overall Straight Up (S/U), Points Spread (ATS) and Over/Under results plus their Neutral records and Scoring Averages/Margins through the games of Monday, February 8, 2021

Weirdness to continue

It's safe to say that the NHL season has gone as expected, but also not.

We are nearing the quarter pole of this wild hockey season and there hasn't been a shortage of drama. A whopping 22 games (not counting the four at the start of the Dallas Stars' season) have been postponed so far due to COVID-19.

As a result, the NHL has had to get creative in finding days to make up for lost time. Some games have been pushed to the end of the season, while others are being dropped in former off days to ensure this slate ends in a timely manner for the Stanley Cup Playoffs to begin.

Think of the ramifications. For one, the health and safety of the players is paramount. It goes beyond COVID when players are playing an abundance of back-to-backs at a high enough level. The taxi squad does help, but how much can it help in a 56-game season?

There's the mindset that these players could benefit from playing every other day. It helps maintain a

rhythm that keeps the best players at their peak.

The Vegas Golden Knights, for

Rinkside

Danny Webster

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example, just concluded a 10-day layoff due to defenseman Alex Pietrangolo and coaches Pete DeBoer, Ryan Craig and Ryan McGill enter COVID-19 protocol. Three games were postponed, but despite that week off, Vegas swept its two-game set with the Los Angeles Kings this weekend.

Most teams would want that week off, similar to what the NHL All-Star break/mandatory bye week would entail. But these are weird times to have this stretch of rest. A bye week would come when teams are halfway done with their schedule.

It's different when you're seven games down and notice 49 more after.

"You never want to miss a week, but we've done stuff like this in the past," said Golden Knights captain Mark Stone. "We've had our bye weeks, we've had our All-Star breaks, and then we've come back, had a couple of practices and had to play. It's not completely out of the ordinary for us."

It's why the NHL has gifted teams with the aforementioned taxi squad. In the words of Usher, situations will arise in our lives, but you've got to be smart about it. Preparing for these situations on a day-to-day basis, all while trying to get a team ready to play a game is less than ideal.

Toronto Maple Leafs forward Wayne Simmonds is a perfect example. Simmonds was looking like a bargain addition for Toronto, having scored five goals and being its enforcer when called upon, could miss up to six weeks with a hand injury.

I'm not saying Simmonds moves the needle on players missing time (Toronto will still be good), but it's something that can be more common; whether it be a simple pull or cramp, or as something as freak-



Photo from USA Today

The Maple Leafs will be without Wayne Simmonds.

accident like as Simmonds taking a puck to the hand.

Injuries, even under normal circumstances, will still sway the books. If Connor McDavid hyper-extended something because he's playing on a fourth game in five days, that will affect lines the most. But what might affect the books more is these baseball-like sets that are taking place.

Meticulous decision making must go into what games to bet. It's a toss-up because a matchup that looks great on paper could throw your ticket off. On Sunday, for example, the Detroit Red Wings — losers of eight straight coming in — handed the Florida Panthers their first regulation loss of the season. Unless something goes awry, Florida should win Tuesday because of an extra day to prepare for an inferior opponent.

Be cautious about previous matchups. Your best chance is to take the first game into account. Underdogs may cash at any time, especially since these teams will be in the midst of playing each other eight times.

I also want to take a moment to thank each and every one of you who have supported Gaming Today before, and during, my time here. It has been a fun venture bringing you NHL content via this print product every week, and I've had a lot of enjoyment doing it.

Thank you to all of you who not

only supported this paper, but did so in supporting the present-day print journalism product. Even while going digital, people still love the paper, and it was evident from the time you picked up a copy and read our content.

Thursday

Capitals at Sabres: This will be Buffalo's first game since the mass COVID postponement. Not ideal to face Alex Ovechkin and company out of the gate.

The over has cashed four of the last five for Washington. If it leads to who scores the most goals, give it to the Caps. **CAPITALS**

Friday

Bruins at Rangers: It was only a matter of time before Boston came alive. Three straight wins entering Wednesday, and all by way of David Pastrnak returning and scoring goals at will. Expect Boston to keep this momentum going. **BRUINS**

Saturday

Golden Knights at Sharks: A weird situation for Vegas; this will be the first game of a back-to-back that has them back home the next night against Colorado.

It's Pete DeBoer's first game against his former team, but I have a hunch the Knights will save their energy for the Avs. **SHARKS**

Last week: 1-2

Season: 6-6

City on impressive run

The sky-blue juggernaut, indeed. That's what The Guardian called Manchester City after it continued a scintillating streak through the weekend.

"Like a boa constrictor," said NBCSN play-by-play ace Arlo White on Sunday from Anfield, "slowly squeezing the life out of their Premier League opponents."

Man City is on an 18-0-3 run, with 14 consecutive victories in all competitions and 10 Premier

League triumphs in a row. It leads rival Manchester United by five points in the standings and is bearing down on a third EPL championship in four seasons.

This is a romp that has padded — and will continue to thicken — the wallet, by following proper procedures. In those past 21 matches, giving a goal and a half has paid off handsomely. The three draws would have lost, of course, as would have four one-goal victories.

However, those 14 wins by margin would have returned exceptional dividends. Also, giving 1.5 goals would have lessened — compared to betting Win on the three-way — the cost of the three

ties and four one-goal wins.

It proved to be the case again Sunday when City belted Liverpool, which suffered yet another

home defeat. City scored. Liverpool answered with a penalty kick by Mo Salah, which only seemed to anger the visitors.

Alisson, the usually reliable Reds' keeper just back from an illness, made two dreadful errors within a short stretch, and City capitalized both times.

Liverpool trailed 3-1 in two blinks. It ended 4-1.

City was an enviable +125, the average at 13 offshore books, just to beat the Reds. At -1.5 goals, that bumped to +323. The advantage of giving 1.5 goals in another of those plays was +138 to -192; in others -109/-345, -164/-556, +237/-110, +291/+114 and -109/-323.

Playing City correctly lately has taken care of the bills for at least a few months, boosting the holiday account, too. City is -408, on the three-way, to win at Swansea today in the FA Cup, but a more appealing -140 at -1.5 goals. It plays host to

Please see Miech p22

Free Kicks

Rob Miech

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Look for Gonzaga-Baylor in Indy come April

A few hours before Gonzaga and Baylor were set to tip off Dec. 5 in Indianapolis, it was announced that the game would not be played due to two positive COVID-19 tests in the Bulldogs' program.

Both coaches — the Zags' Mark Few and the Bears' Scott Drew — announced that they were open to rescheduling the matchup.

But no make-up game has materialized. And for college basketball fans, that's a good thing because it has become apparent when the No. 1 and 2 teams should meet: Monday, April 5, in the national title game at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis.

Gonzaga and Baylor sat atop Monday's AP Top 25 as they have every week this season. Since the preseason poll came out in October, no other team has received a single No. 1 vote.

And the gap between the Big 2 and the other 355 Division I teams has grown since the season tipped off in late November.

In the advanced analytics world, Gonzaga, after Monday's 82-71 win over BYU, is No. 1 in Ken Pomeroy's ratings. Baylor is No. 2. The two teams are flipped in Jeff Sagarin's rankings. Pomeroy rates teams based on what he calls adjusted efficiency margin.

Currently, Gonzaga (35.47) and Baylor (35.29) rank as the second- and third-best teams in the Ken-

Courtside

Ched Whitney

[@ched777](#)

Pom era, which stretches back to the 2001-02 season, trailing only the 2015 Kentucky team that went 38-1 and won the national title. The Bulldogs have the nation's No. 2 offense and No. 6 defense. Baylor is third in both categories.

The difference at KenPom between the Bears and No. 3 Michigan (28.30) is 6.99, the biggest in any rankings over the past 19 seasons.

Gonzaga and Baylor are a combined 36-0 with just three games decided by single digits. Together they're 13-0 in Quadrant 1 games and 5-0 against Quad 2, according to the NCAA's NET ratings.

The two seemingly overtake each other at KenPom.com with every game played. We'll see what that means for the Bears, who are currently slated to go 18 days without a game after recent cancellations. Baylor's next scheduled



Photo from USA Today

Scott Drew has Baylor on track to face Gonzaga in April for national championship.

game is Feb. 20 against Oklahoma State, followed by Iowa State at home Feb. 23 and Kansas on the road Feb. 27 to close out the regular season.

Gonzaga recently shuffled its schedule, moving up games against Pacific and BYU. The Bulldogs have four regular-season games remaining.

The biggest threat to the Zags and Bears is an invisible opponent: the pandemic.

The NCAA's decision to play all 67 tournament games in Indiana could help limit the spread of COVID-19 — and it certainly will cut down on travel.

Teams that play in the First Four on March 18 will compete in West Lafayette and Bloomington, just 67 and 55 miles, respectively, from Indianapolis.

Before the NCAA Tournament became an Indiana-only event, a team like Stanford —

a candidate to play in the First Four as a No. 12 seed — would have had to travel to Dayton, Ohio (2,413 miles), and could have been assigned to a regional in an originally scheduled site like Providence, R.I. (another 800 miles).

But in order to reach the Final Four, Gonzaga and Baylor — and the other 66 teams — have to play the games. Program pauses could lead to chaos in a tournament that is slated to take place over 18 days.

With other COVID-19 variants making their way to the United States, the NCAA — or the leagues themselves — should strongly consider doing away with conference tournaments this season.

Here are this week's picks. The numbers for the spreads are based on game predictions at KenPom.com.

Wednesday

Northern Iowa at Drake -11: The Panthers are a disappointing 6-12 in a season in which they were considered a serious challenger for the Missouri Valley Conference.

Northern Iowa doesn't guard shooters well, which should be a problem against the Bulldogs (top 40 nationally from both 2- and 3-point range), who should have some extra motivation after seeing their perfect season tarnished by a loss at Valparaiso on Sunday. **DRAKE**

Thursday

Nebraska at Wisconsin -11: A visit to the Big Ten's worst team is just what the Badgers needed after three double-digit losses in their past five games.

The Cornhuskers are a bad shooting team, and Wisconsin enters the game with the nation's ninth-best defense.

The Badgers aren't particularly good on the offensive glass, but with 6-foot-11 Nate Reuvers and 6-10 Micah Potter, they'll have a size advantage against Nebraska, which isn't a good rebounding team on with end of the floor. **WISCONSIN**

Friday

Georgia Tech at Clemson -3: The Yellow Jackets beat the Tigers by 18 three weeks ago. Since then, Clemson is 3-2 with losses to Florida State (by 19) and Duke (by 26) and wins over Louisville, North Carolina (by 13) and Syracuse (by 17). So?

The losses came on the road, the wins at home.

Clemson is 1-4 — 0-5 ATS — in road games this season. At home the Tigers are 8-1 SU and 6-2-1 ATS, and they've covered all five times as a home favorite of three or less. **CLEMSON**

Last week: 3-0
Season: 24-8-4



Photo from USA Today

Corey Kispert has led No. 1 Gonzaga to a perfect 19-0 record so far.

Derby trail is heating up

The Kentucky Derby prep races around the country can be viewed as horse racing's version of college basketball's March Madness.

Regional winners from Florida, Arkansas, New York, Louisiana, and California will, after a pandemic-induced delayed 2020 Derby, once again gather on the first Saturday in May at Churchill Downs.

It's still early, but one question has started to pop up already: Who's going to win the Kentucky Derby? Let's take a look region by region at the current major Derby contenders.

Florida

Greatest Honor, trained by Shug McGaughey, was very impressive winning the Holy Bull at Gulfstream Park. He is bred to improve as the distances increase and is on a pattern similar to the one his trainer used getting Orb to the winner's circle for the 2013 Run for the Roses.

Greatest Honor will use the Florida series to complete his prep work, including the Feb. 27 Fountain of Youth and March 27 Florida Derby at Gulfstream.

Fire at Will, winner of the Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf, is scheduled to try dirt in the Fountain of Youth for trainer Mike Maker, while Candy Man Rocket, winner of the Sam F. Davis last weekend at Tampa Bay Downs for trainer Bill Mott, will likely return to that track for the Tampa Bay Derby March 6.

Arkansas

Caddo River, trained by Brad Cox, won the Smarty Jones Stakes opening day of the Oaklawn meet. He got an easy lead that day, so while he is lightly raced and improving, he will need to continue to move forward in a loaded region.

Breeders' Cup Juvenile winner Essential Quality (also trained by Brad Cox) is expected to make his three-year-old debut in Monday's Southwest Stakes, and will likely be joined by Jackie's Warrior

Lindo Report

Jon Lindo

 @JonLindo60

(Steve Asmussen), who was the beaten favorite in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile. B.C. Juvenile third place finisher Keepmeinmind (Robertino Diodoro) came back to win the Kentucky Jockey Club at Churchill Downs in November and is also expected to make his sophomore debut in the Southwest.

Expect trainer Bob Baffert to be well-represented with California shippers for the Rebel Stakes March 13 and Arkansas Derby April 10 at Oaklawn. Baffert trainees Charlatan and Nadal won split divisions of the Arkansas Derby in 2020, though Charlatan was disqualified for a medication violation.

New York

Trainer Chad Brown looks like the dominant force in New York, as Risk Taking made it two straight victories going 1 1/8 miles in the Withers Stakes and will likely be pointed to the Wood Memorial April 3.

Brown also figures to be a major player in the next New York prep race — the March 6 Gotham Stakes, where Highly Motivated is expected to stretch out for the first time after winning the Nyquist Stakes sprinting on the Breeders' Cup undercard at Keeneland Nov. 6.

Louisiana

Saturday's Risen Star Stakes at the Fair Grounds has drawn the 1-2-3 finishers from the Lecomte Stakes — Midnight Bourbon (Asmussen), Proxy (Mike Stidham), and Mandaloun (Cox). They will face Senor Buscador (Todd Fincher), impressive winner of the Springboard Mile at Remington Park. The Louisiana Derby March 20 would be the next logical step



Photo from Chelsea Durand/NYRA

Risk Taking is one of trainer Chad Brown's Kentucky Derby hopefuls.

for those who run well in the Risen Star.

California

It looks like a strong group based in California this year, headed by Baffert's highly regarded Sham Stakes winner Life is Good. His stablemate Medina Spirit, who chased Life is Good home in the Sham Stakes, validated the form of the race with a gutty win in the Robert B. Lewis Stakes.

Lewis runner-up Roman Centurian (Simon Callaghan) was making his first start vs. winners and appears to have plenty of upside, while Breeders' Cup Juvenile runner-up Hot Rod Charlie (Doug O'Neill) was beaten a neck and a nose in the Lewis making his three-year-old debut.

Long-fused Rombauer (Michael

McCarthy) skipped the Lewis and will run in the El Camino Real Derby at Golden Gate Saturday, and a new face emerged from a highly-rated Maiden race last Sunday at Santa Anita.

Bezoz (Baffert) had been heavily bet in Kentucky Derby Future wagers prior to his Sunday debut, but after pressing the pace and briefly getting the lead he tired badly. First-time starter Dream Shake (Peter Eurton) looped the field to win easily and earned a lofty 96 Beyer Speed Figure in the process. It may not be too late for him to be a factor in races like the San Felipe March 6 or the Santa Anita Derby April 3.

Finish Line

As Gaming Today hits the finish line after 45 years in print, I would

like to thank owner Bill Paulos, managing editor/GM Howard Barish and senior editor Steve Carp for giving a voice to the horse racing industry.

Writers Richard Eng, Richard Sabber, Ed Golden, Dave Valento and Steve Davidowitz helped pave the way by keeping GT readers up to date, and I am thankful for the opportunity to have contributed. Hope to see you around town in the race books!

Lindo Report play for Gaming Today: Santa Anita Friday, Race 7 — On Mars (No. 3). Cal-bred filly was fanned extremely wide making an early move when beaten less than two lengths in the Lady of Shamrock Stakes opening day. She drops to proper level and can make the last run with a patient ride.

No Super record for Nevada's books

A record handle for the Super Bowl in Nevada?

Not this year. Not even close.

Tuesday's release of the betting numbers by the Nevada Gaming Control Board showed the state's handle on the game was just over \$136 million. That's well short of the record of \$158.58 million set in 2018. In fact, the handle this year was the lowest in five years for Nevada.

The good news? The state's sportsbooks won \$12.5 million, a percentage of 9.2%

It was the same scene at every Nevada sportsbook on Super Bowl Sunday with limited seating and smaller parties. But with the help of mobile phone apps, there weren't a lot of books unhappy with their overall handle in the Tampa Bay Buccaneers' 31-9 win over the favored Kansas City Chiefs (-3).

Most books had similar stories on how they won and lost on the day with the biggest win coming from the game staying under (\$6) and the biggest loss being on Super Bowl futures and the Bucs money line (+140).

"It was a very solid day for us," said Westgate Las Vegas Super-Book VP Jay Kornegay. "We did well in three-fourths of the main categories. We did well on the pointspread, total and props. The Bucs money line was the only negative, but we're not complaining. We'll take that every year.

"It was a satisfying day. Handle was almost exactly the number we posted last year despite the future pool being well below last year (due to the pandemic). We actually wrote more on this year's game than we did last year."

The handle for the game was larger than last season at the SuperBook despite no huge rush from visitors on Friday and Saturday. The phone accounts may have been the big winner here.


"We ended up with a good win," said Station Casinos sportsbook director Jason McCormick. "Zip on the future book, but the under, parlay cards, and props all shook out O.K."

William Hill's 100-plus sportsbooks in Nevada were elated with their phone handle with head

bookmaker Nick Bogdanovich telling me last week that 70% of their handle on the game was through

Las Vegas Sportsbooks

Micah Roberts

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the phones.

"We lost on futures, lost on the money line, but won the total, side, and won a little on the props," Bogdanovich said. "It was a solid day with a monster handle."

I got the feeling between Kornegay and Bogdanovich that a Nevada state Super Bowl record of \$158 million in handle could be challenged. Nevada's BetMGM sportsbook director Jeff Stoneback wasn't so confident but was happy with the result.

"It was a decent day for us, the under (56) was best for us," Stoneback said. "The props turned out O.K. as well, but we lost seven-figures in Super Bowl futures."

Quite a few people had large bets all over Las Vegas taking 50-1 and 60-1 odds before Tom Brady was announced as his destination on March 19 where most books dropped down to 14-1 odds after Brady signed with Tampa.

Stoneback had unforeseen issues occur on Sunday that went beyond the game. The technology of the phones helped books create more volume but it also shut a major chain of books down at the worst moment.

"We were down from about 10 minutes to kickoff until 9:30 p.m. (PT) and while most of the people affected were understanding about the situation there were a few that were very vocal about being unhappy and not getting paid right after the game," Stoneback said.

It's the most helpless feeling as the boss of a book when the system shuts down and not knowing how to fix it. Magnify the feeling times 100 on Super Bowl day. The volume through the phones and counter stressed out the system BetMGM uses.

The good news for Stoneback

and the MGM books on the strip was that they didn't have their usual Super Bowl crowd.

"The Mirage had only 47% occupancy on Saturday night," he said. "We have more people coming for Valentine's Day weekend next week."

The results of not having as much over-the-counter cash coming in on Saturday and Sunday is what made Stoneback a bit skeptical of setting a Nevada Super Bowl handle record. However, they had bigger bets this season than 2020 such as \$2.3 million bet on the Bucs +3.5 (-115), \$500,000 bet on the Chiefs money line, and on game day had another \$2.5 million on the Chiefs money line as well as \$1 million teaser on the Bucs to over (+9, 50) which lost.

That's over \$6 million on handle alone on four different bets. That's some huge action. But they also didn't give their players the option to bet in-game or halftime, which is another huge chunk expected.

The South Point's Chris Andrews said they did "really good" and also had a surprise for their guests with newly retired NASCAR driver Brendan Gaughan writing tickets at window No. 12. No word on the void count, but it's something he and his father South Point owner Michael Gaughan have been doing for years to chip in.

Circa Sports director Matt Metcalf said they "had a good day and lost a couple of big parlays to Tampa, but it ended up being the best result for them outside of KC winning by 1 or 2."

Up north at the Atlantis Reno sportsbook, director Marc Nelson said he would have preferred another result, but they still ended up winning over 8% on the day. He needed Chiefs and under the most. Nelson stayed at -3.5 (EVEN), the longest in the state.

All the books stayed unified in not moving below -3 down to -2.5 and all needed the under 56, which the sharps bet down early from 57. Parlay risk with the over connected with either team was gigantic.

Thanks and farewell

It has been a fun ride with Gaming Today as this will be the final

paper printed.

It started in 1997 when Dave Tuley, then GT's editor, asked me if I wanted to do a weekly NASCAR story. I said yes, and have been writing something each week since then.

I thought it was important to share insights I gained from running sportsbooks to the public.

I want to thank everyone I worked with at GT over the years and especially the sportsbook directors who always gave me access and basically wrote the stories I told. I'll still be doing NASCAR articles and videos for VegasInsider.com with free selections and I cover all sports for CBS Sportsline. We'll keep in touch.

Super Bowl LVI

SoFi Stadium - Inglewood, California • February 6, 2022
ODDS PROVIDED BY SuperBook at Westgate 2.8.21

CHIEFS	5-1	CARDINALS	30-1
PACKERS	10-1	VIKINGS	40-1
BILLS	10-1	JAGUARS	60-1
RAVENS	12-1	RAIDERS	40-1
SAINTS	14-1	BRONCOS	60-1
BUCCANEERS.....	8-1	EAGLES.....	60-1
DOLPHINS.....	20-1	BEARS.....	60-1
49ERS.....	16-1	FALCONS.....	60-1
SEAHAWKS	20-1	PATRIOTS	60-1
STEELERS.....	30-1	GIANTS	80-1
BROWNS.....	30-1	Washington Football ...	80-1
CHARGERS	30-1	LIONS.....	100-1
COWBOYS	30-1	PANTHERS	50-1
RAMS	16-1	JETS	100-1
TITANS.....	40-1	BENGALS.....	100-1
COLTS.....	30-1	TEXANS	100-1

NFC Championship

PACKERS	5-1	VIKINGS	20-1
SAINTS	7-1	EAGLES.....	30-1
BUCCANEERS.....	4-1	BEARS.....	30-1
49ERS.....	8-1	FALCONS.....	30-1
SEAHAWKS	10-1	GIANTS	40-1
COWBOYS	15-1	Washington Football ...	40-1
RAMS	8-1	LIONS.....	50-1
CARDINALS	15-1	PANTHERS	25-1

AFC Championship

CHIEFS	5-2	COLTS.....	15-1
BILLS	5-1	JAGUARS	30-1
RAVENS	6-1	RAIDERS	20-1
DOLPHINS.....	10-1	BRONCOS	30-1
STEELERS.....	15-1	PATRIOTS	30-1
BROWNS.....	15-1	JETS	50-1
CHARGERS	15-1	BENGALS.....	50-1
TITANS.....	20-1	TEXANS	50-1

Future for Las Vegas full of hope

The phrase of the month when it comes to Las Vegas is "Green shoots."

There's a lot to be hopeful for even though the city is far from getting back to normal. Several projects continue to be built while others may go from the planning stage to groundbreaking and construction.

The \$4.3 billion Resorts World Las Vegas is on track to open this summer and has gotten in just under 100,000 applications for 6,000 jobs. Virgin Hotels Las Vegas, the former Hard Rock renovated, is expected to open this spring.

While construction has slowed on the \$1.6 billion MSG Sphere concert and performance venue near the Venetian, it will be completed, even if it won't open until 2023.

Anthony Marnell III, the developer of the M Resort has proposed building a new casino across St. Rose Parkway from it in West

Henderson. Wall Street analysts and gaming industry consultants expect Red Rock Resorts to ulti-

Gaming Inc.

Buck Wargo

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mately move forward on a new casino along the 215 Beltway and Durango Road in the southwest valley.

Coronavirus cases are dropping in Nevada and the rest of the country and deaths are expected to follow that trendline. More vaccinations are expected to come online by March. Congress has taken the steps to approve a \$1.9 billion stimulus package in the coming weeks that's expected to bolster the economy.

All of that fits the definition of

green shoots — the buzz word as last week's earnings call by Wynn Resorts.

Wynn Resorts CEO Matt Maddox said the company is in the best position it's ever been in to translate revenue into net income "as more of the business comes back because it's going to. We continue to anticipate we will see growth month-over-month in each of our markets."

Wynn made \$21 million in net income in the fourth quarter in Las Vegas and \$14 million of that came in October, Maddox said. Business went down because of a pickup in COVID-19 cases around the coun-

try and tighter restrictions implemented in Nevada in late November, he said. But that's changing, he said.

with Global Market Advisors. "It shows the long-term belief that Vegas is going to come back, and there's going to be opportunity down the road. It may come out at a perfect time because it takes a couple of years to build any development, and that's when we may re-emerge from the great shutdown (from the coronavirus)."

Wall Street analysts say that a proposed Durango Station casino resort in the southwest valley that's been in the works for two decades



Photo from WYNN Resorts

Wynn Resorts CEO Matt Maddox.

"We've seen in the last 10 days an uptick again, and it's right in line with the COVID numbers around the country decreasing," Maddox said. "It's clear that people are ready to have fun, and they're ready to travel. There's still not quite sure it's time."

Bookings per night have gone back up to nearly 1,600 from 800 per night in November and December, Maddox said. For the Super Bowl, Wynn was at 50% occupancy for the first time since October with more than 1,000 customers. That's "significantly more than New Year's Eve," he said.

"While there's still a long way to go in Las Vegas, you can tell that as people feel more safe, they're ready to travel and ready to have fun," Maddox said. "We've built multiple restaurants in Las Vegas during this period that we haven't opened. We will open new restaurants this year as the restrictions continue to be lifted."

As for the potential for new casinos that might be built in Las Vegas in the next two to five years, Marnell has gone public with his proposal to buy nine acres from the city of Henderson for a \$250 million resort.

"The proposed development on the south end of town says it's a growth area of the city and opportunity for more growth in the region," said Brendan Bussmann, director of government affairs

may finally get built. Red Rock Resort officials aren't talking but analysts are expecting it to move closer to reality.

"Between Red Rock Station and Green Valley Resort, there isn't a casino along the Beltway," Bussmann said. "The closest ones are the Orleans and Silverton."

Barry Jonas, a Wall Street analyst with Truist Securities, said they talked with Red Rock executives after a recent conference, and they said it's the most attractive development opportunity in the company. With no resorts nearby, that area is underserved, he said.

"They're reworking a design they did in 2016 and alter it for a post-COVID-19 world and change the design," Jonas said. "They didn't say we're going to start it and definitely do it, but others have opined that they will."

Chad Beynon, managing director of gaming and lodging equities with MacQuarie Capital, said Red Rock has talked about the Durango site "being one of the best locations if they ever had a new property in the market. I think in 2021 that's something they can start contextualizing more."

"I think it's a location that always made sense. It's just what other things are they working on at the time. With the profits coming back at the other properties, they're in a really good spot if they want to move forward."

Miech: Bayern in charge

Continued from p18

Tottenham on Saturday, where it's -303 on the three-way but a mere -103 giving 1.5 goals.

Man City boss Pep Guardiola and his players appear to be on a take-no-prisoners mission in England. So does Atlético Madrid, which is on an 8-0-1 run, in Spain, with an eight-point cushion atop La Liga. Los Colchoneros—the Mattress Makers, since Atlético's first-team stripes resemble a typical Spanish mattress — are on a magnificent 17-2-4 run in all competitions and might finally bust the FC Barcelona-Real Madrid monopoly.

Since 2003-04, either Barça or Real have claimed every La Liga crown except for Atlético's in 2013-14. Its rock is 28-year-old Slovenian backstop Jan Oblak, among the world's finest keepers with PSG's Keylor Navas and Man City's Ederson.

Circle March 14, when Atlético plays at Getafe's Coliseum Alfonso Pérez. Since April Fool's Day 2012, Madrid is 15-0-3 against Getafe with a 34-0 goals advantage. Eighteen consecutive clean sheets!

In Germany, Bayern Munich, ahead of RB Leipzig by seven points and fueled by Robert Lewandowski's Euro-best 24 goals, is pounding its way toward a ninth consecutive Bundesliga championship. Two of Munich's past three matches have been by margin, too, so consider it for The City Rule, or giving 1.5 goals.

In Italy, AC Milan (49 points) and Inter Milan (47) might end a Juventus (42) Serie A title run at nine seasons. The last time Juve didn't win it, AC Milan did, in 2010-11. And look out for Lazio, which has won six in a row.

AC Milan is led by the ageless wonder, Zlatan Ibrahimović, who turns 40 in October and leads Italy with a goals-plus-assists rate of 1.53. We should all hope to shine so well in our latter years.

Finally, in France, PSG trails Lille and Lyon by scant points but its immense Neymar-fueled firepower, a 3.79 goals-plus-assists rate far better than its two nemeses, gives it the edge toward an eighth Ligue 1 title in nine seasons.

Saturday

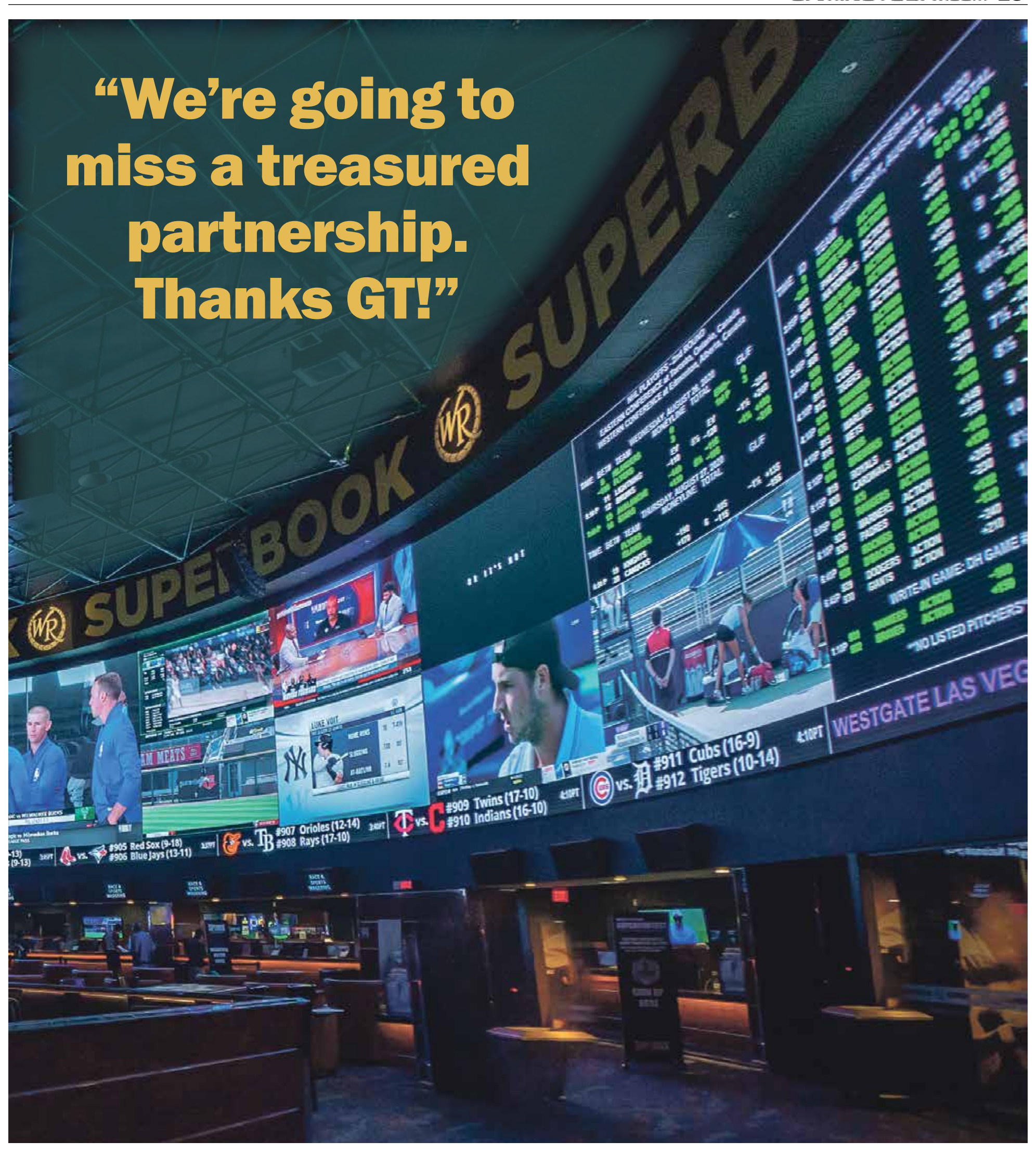
Tottenham at Manchester City -1.5 -103: City has allowed a Euro-low 43 shots on target. Brazilian keeper Ederson has clean-sheeted eight of his past nine foes. **MANCHESTER CITY**

Juventus at Napoli +193, Total 2.5 Ov -110: Two of the most dynamic European sides clash inside Diego Armando Maradona Stadium. Expect fireworks. Juve and Napoli are tied for sixth, at 3.70 apiece, in goal-creating actions; ninth (25.45) and first (28.80) in shot-creating actions; and seventh (3.65) and fourth (3.75) in goals-plus-assists average. **NAPOLI and OVER**

Last week: 2-1

Season: 37-38-5

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