

Sports Betting Stealing the Spotlight? 888-ADMIT-IT is the Game Plan for Football's Grand Finale.

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SANFORD, Fla. -- Football's big game is this Sunday, February 13th, and millions of Americans are gearing up to watch who is going to be the victor on the playing field and in the betting arena. According to Jennifer Kruse, Executive Director of the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling, "While football has been an American pastime, today it seems much of the focus is on gambling. Fans can no longer watch a game without being bombarded with sports betting advertisements. This is a significant cultural shift and one in which government, health care professionals, and others need to be attentive to and prepared for, because the proliferation of sports betting is increasing the number of people at risk for gambling addiction."

Legalized sports betting exploded in 2021, in large part following gambling facility closures and quarantines presented by COVID-19. During this period, 11 states approved sports wagering, most of which sanctioned transactions through mobile devices. As of February 2022, 30 states and the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico offer some form of legal sports betting via mobile app, in person at a casino or sportsbook, or both. Evidence of this growth is the projection by the American Gaming Association that 31.4 million Americans will bet \$7.61 billion (legal and illegal betting) on this year's championship game, making it the most heavily bet game ever.¹

Society is transforming through digital technology and is becoming accustomed to instantaneous and cashless transactions, which now have transcended to gambling. Exacerbating matters is the sheer number of bets one can place, including live in-play wagers, which allow gamblers to place bets throughout the course of a game as events are unfolding. These "micro bets" convert these games to continuous forms of gambling which have a rapid cycle of play, allow for the reinvestment of winnings, and do not encourage breaks in play, which research has consistently shown to be highly addictive. "When people can gamble from anywhere, at any time, and can do so in isolation without the benefit of others knowing, this presents risks for gambling addiction, as it does for the use and abuse of alcohol and drugs. Given technological advances and the action associated with live betting, it is particularly attractive to young males who enjoy the accessibility, immediacy, and privacy of the games," explained Kruse.

Though many sports bettors may have knowledge of the games, the players, and the conditions, because there are variables that are unknown or unforeseen, sports wagering, like other forms of gambling, involves varying degrees of chance. However, research has shown that sports bettors perceive their gambling as more determined by their own skills, knowledge, and analysis, and less by chance or luck. It further reveals that gamblers who play games of skill overestimate their personal ability to win. Further, younger bettors are less experienced with gambling, are more likely to misunderstand how gambling works, and have irrational beliefs about the odds. For example, some mistakenly believe that the more bets they place, the better their chances for winning.

Finally, Kruse suggests that recovering compulsive gamblers and others who wish to refrain from gambling on the game put protective measures in place by scheduling alternative activities with trusted loved ones and by contacting the [888-ADMIT-IT HelpLine](#).

Some problem gambling warning signs among sports bettors include:

- Inability to watch sporting events without wagering
- Borrowing money to gamble on sports
- Writing bad checks or engaging in other criminal activities for money to gamble
- Preoccupation with betting and critical of others interfering with sporting event
- Ignoring family and responsibilities while sporting events are being aired
- Excessive superstitions while sporting event is taking place
- Increasing amounts of bets and chasing losses to get even
- Lying to family and friends about amounts wagered
- Betting excessively on multiple sporting events on a daily or frequent basis

The Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling (FCCG) wants Sunshine State residents to know, [When Gambling is No Longer a Game...888-ADMIT-IT is the Game Plan!](#) The statewide [888-ADMIT-IT Confidential and Multilingual Problem Gambling HelpLine](#) is available 24/7 and is for anyone experiencing difficulties due to gambling, including gamblers and their loved ones. Worried about your own gambling or that of a loved one? Call [888-ADMIT-IT](#) (888-236-4848), text [\(321-978-0555\)](#), email fccg@gamblinghelp.org, start a live chat ([gamblinghelp.org](#)), tap into the [888-ADMIT-IT App](#), or reach out to the FCCG on [social media](#), such as [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#), to get connected to help and hope.

¹ "Record 31.4 Million Americans to Wager \$7.61B on Super Bowl LVI." American Gaming Association, 9 Feb. 2022, <https://www.americangaming.org/new/record-31-4-million-americans-to-wager-on-super-bowl-lvi/>.