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Tim Donaghy Teams Up With National Council on Problem Gambling During March Madness to Encourage Players, Coaches and Referees Not to Gamble on Sports

As an NBA referee, Tim Donaghy had what many only dream about, a family he loved, a great salary, and the best seat in the house to watch some of the NBA's finest stars and legends play the great game of basketball. Donaghy lived a wonderful life. That life shattered when Donaghy's gambling addiction led him to bet on NBA games.

Tim was not always a gambler, but he was always involved in sports. In his book *Personal Foul* Donaghy states, like many young men, "Somewhere in my subconscious, there was an insatiable need for more action and more thrills, along with a dangerous impulse towards risky behavior." In Tim's case, simple wagers on golf escalated to high-stakes betting in casinos and with bookies on a variety of sports.

When it comes to gambling on sports, the more perceived influence or skill one has, the more likely you are to bet and to bet more. This puts athletes, coaches and referees, both male and female, at a great risk for being willing to gamble on a sport or a team that they know a lot about. Participation and problems with gambling peak in young adults, and statistics show that male athletes are a group that is particularly at a high risk of developing a gambling problem.

"We encourage athletes, coaches, and referees to make sure that what may start out as casual, small-stakes gambling doesn't lead to a path of addiction and destruction," says Keith Whyte, Executive Director of the National Council on Problem Gambling. As Tim notes, "March Madness is one of the biggest times of the year to bet on games, but something as small as your first wager can develop into an addiction over time."

Gambling addiction led Donaghy to spend 15 months in prison. Tim says "I've accepted responsibility for my actions, learned from my mistakes and I'm moving forward in a positive, healthy, and honest way. There is hope and help available for people with gambling problems."

If you or someone you know has a problem with gambling, call 1.800.522.4700. Confidential assistance is available nationwide, 24 hours a day.

The National Council on Problem Gambling is the national advocate for programs and services to assist problem gamblers and their families. NCPG was founded in 1972 and is neutral on legalized gambling.

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