



THE BIG GAME AND THE GAMBLING DISORDERED *Conflicts for Individuals in Gambling Recovery*

January 30, 2017

Washington, DC: As the “big game” approaches, thoughts running through the minds of individuals with a gambling disorder can be conflicting and problematic.

“Hurry up, I hate the wait for the action to begin. The pre-game show begins; it is almost time for kickoff! My palms are beginning to sweat, my heart is beating faster. This is it... the big game, the chance to get even. I am ready to go. I have tossed a coin 500 times and 300 have come up heads. I can tell heads is the winner today. I have studied Luke Bryan; I know how long the National Anthem will be. I am watching videos of Lady Gaga; I can predict costume changes and songs she will sing. Those proposition bets are so fun. I am ready.”

“This is my last betting opportunity for the football season. I want and need to close out on a high. I know more about football than everyone else. Today is my day to prove it! I love all these amateurs betting on the game – what a great chance for me to take their money! This is my business. This is what I do best. The Super Bowl for me is like New Year’s Eve!”

The Recovery Committee of the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG) is made up of people who care deeply about people suffering from gambling disorders. Many of us are in our own recovery from gambling disorders. We recognize and appreciate the lure of placing a bet on the Super Bowl; whether through an office pool, picking boxes at a bar, wagering in Vegas or on-line. It is part of the American pastime. It is fun and appeals to our competitive juices.

But we also know the pitfalls of Super Bowl for the compulsive gambler. They get caught up in the betting, the preponderance of options, odds and lines. It is not just WHO will win, but *“Will Ryan or Brady throw for more yards?” “Will there be*

a safety in the game? How many times will Brady catch the Falcons off-sides? Which commercial precedes the opening kickoff?" The more bets, the more action for the compulsive gambler. This can lead to an overdose of betting that can have truly devastating consequences.

The Recovery Committee stresses caution:

- Don't get caught up in the hype and bet beyond your means.
- Don't mix alcohol with gambling; this may reduce inhibitions.
- Treat gambling as entertainment, not as a job.

For those in early recovery from a gambling disorder, the Super Bowl is a high-risk situation. The best strategy may be to not watch the game at all. It's a great time to go to the movies, spend time with family and friends who don't watch the game, or find healthy ways to keep yourself busy and distracted. We urge everyone to be careful out there. Big events sometimes bring out faulty beliefs like *"I can really triple up on my usual stakes."*

And if you are a loved one, family member or friend of a problem gambler, know that you too can be triggered as you observe their irrational thoughts and behaviors and wonder what you can do to help. Contact Gam-Anon, the organization for loved ones of problem gamblers for information and meetings in your area.

And remember help is always available 24-7: call or text 1-800-522-4700 or chat at www.ncpgambling.org/chat.

Contact:

Jeff Beck, JD, LPC, ICGC II, Clinical Director, Maryland Center of Excellence On Problem Gambling & Chair, NCPG Recovery Committee 667-214-2128
jbeck@som.umaryland.edu

Keith Whyte, Executive Director, NCPG 202.547.9204 or keithw@ncpgambling.org