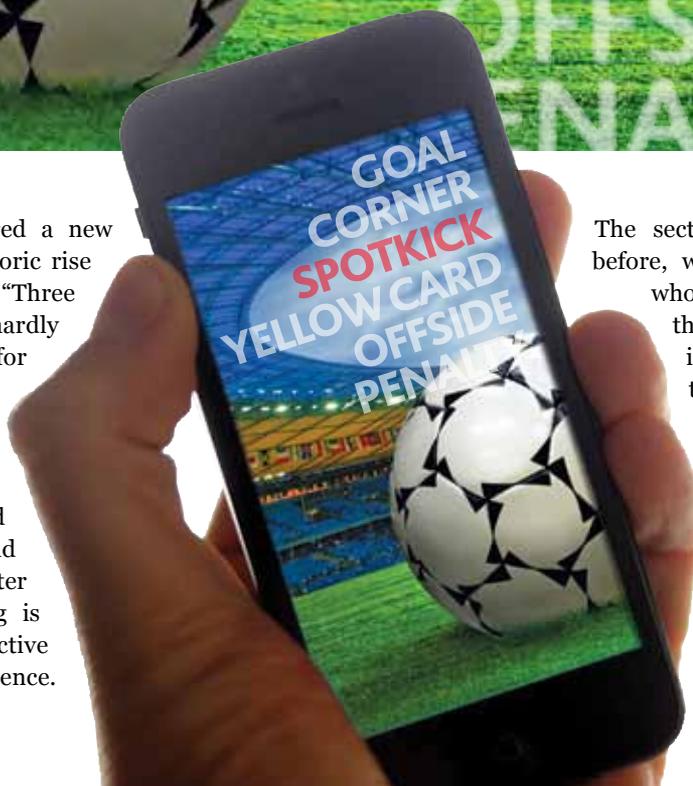


The Future of In-Play

2015 has been a breakthrough year for in-play betting. However, there are many more new developments to come. **Itai Zak**, CEO, and **Tom John Light**, Vice President of Business Development & Commercials, of SB Tech say the sports betting industry is just at the start of a revolutionary journey.



Sports betting has entered a new era, fuelled by the meteoric rise of in-play wagering options. “Three years ago, live betting was hardly known. Today, it accounts for as much as 75% of many operators’ turnover from sports betting,” says Itai Zak, CEO of SBTech, a leading online betting and gaming technology and service provider. No matter what sport, in-play betting is offering punters an interactive and exciting betting experience.



The sector is growing faster than ever before, with live betting now covering a whole range of sports from around the world, ranging from the usual in-play sports such as football and tennis, to golf, ice hockey, cricket, basketball, volleyball and winter sports. Today’s players don’t want to wait until the end of the game to see if they have won or lost, and they want to bet on any event possible, Zak emphasises. This does not come without its challenges. “Operators need to constantly offer new bet types.”

NEW MARKETS

SBTech already provides over 1,000 unique bet markets covering over 25,000 monthly live events. “The introduction of new bet markets, including Free-Bets and Micro-Markets, also known as Fast-Markets, has created a new thrill for the punter,” says Tom John Light, SBTech’s Vice President of Business Development & Commercials. He highlights that SBTech is offering various Fast-Markets on hundreds of in-play events per day, allowing a tennis punter to bet on the next point / the next game, a football punter to bet on ‘What will happen in the next minute?’ or ‘What will happen in the next five minutes?’ with bet selections such as: Throw-In, Corner, Goal Kick, Penalty, Card, Free-Kick, and Goal. In-play betting, he says, has also helped certain sports to achieve more prominence and offered access to new customer segments. “For instance, the turnover from table tennis grew more than tenfold since this sport was offered for in-play betting, making table tennis super-exciting for the average punter.”

Mobile technologies have had a tremendous impact on the evolution of in-play betting. “Around 55 to 60% of the revenues of our customers are coming from mobile devices. Sports betting lends itself to a second screen user experience: you watch a game on your TV, and you place the bet via your mobile,” Zak explains. “We also see a lot of activity on tablets and have custom-tailored front-ends for tablets,” Light adds.

LIVE STREAMING AND CASHOUTS

Live streaming, in particular of sports that do not enjoy much media attention, is seen as a must-have for sportsbooks offering in-play betting. According to Light, it is a major acquisition tool that encourages betting and brand loyalty. Itai Zak emphasises that players want to find great live coverage and betting markets in one place, and SB Tech has introduced high-quality live-streaming on a huge variety of games. Operators can benefit from complete technical integration with three of the industry’s leading video-streaming providers. Offering multiple cash-out options are also regarded as crucial in attracting punters. Cashout functions increase the turnover for the operator, simply because the same funds can be rolled over multiple times. “However, they are equally important for the punter”, says Light because a cashout can act as a stop loss for potential losing bets. The punter can change the betting strategy

depending on the developments, or cash out his winnings in order to cut risk. “This makes punters feel more comfortable in placing bets.” SBTech even offers a cashout function, which gives players the option to sell their bets back to the operator.

MANAGING NEW RISKS

While in-play betting offers operators new opportunities, they also face new challenges. “In-play betting has created a new kind of risk that is related to speed. For instance, a punter can be in the football stadium and bet right when the goal hits, so operators need to be super quick,” Light says. SBTech offers operators ways to minimise these risks. The company has 100 in-play traders. “Each trader has been skilfully trained in the SBTech Traders Academy and has been equipped with the know-how and knowledge to make the best real-time decisions in regard to in-play trading. They use accessible statistics and detailed information on the punter’s behaviour before manually accepting a bet but without delaying the bet acceptance,” Light comments. Operators also need to stay abreast of the latest technology innovations. “You either need to have a strong provider or a strong innovation team. Today’s punters are smart and innovation-savvy. Come to the market with a leading product or don’t come to the market at all.” This is Light’s advice to any operator.

LOOKING AHEAD

In the future, Zak and Light agree, the quality of the in-play betting experience will increase, while in-play will continue on its growth path, covering an even wider range of events, including the live betting on non-sports events such as political elections. Mobile betting will also be more accessible across more devices, with better touch screen capabilities and more personalised offers. “Punters expect a personalised betting experience, this means we need to cater for different gender and geographical preferences,” Zak says. Many new exciting elements will already be launched this year. “We are seeking to make our sportsbook much more mobile-friendly,” Light says, adding that SB Tech is planning to bring a fully responsive sportsbook design to the market, including new data-driven visualisation graphics. “We will also launch our Chameleon360 which is our intuitive iGaming platform integrated to all known third-party providers, offering intelligent reporting and super-strong CRM.” ■



Itai Zak is the CEO of SBTech. He joined SBTech in 2011, bringing more than 15 years of experience in various senior positions in the iGaming industry and is in charge of driving the company’s strategy and vision through the operational and commercial management of the more than 300 employees in the SBTech group. Prior to his current role at SBTech, Mr Zak served as Executive Vice President of iGaming products at Microgaming, which saw him in charge of the mobile and retail division of the company.



Tom John Light has been working in the gaming industry for many years with a focus on casino operations and sports betting. Currently, Tom acts as Vice President of Business Development & Commercials at SBTech. He is renowned for his role as Vice President of Business Development at FashionTV. Additionally Tom has successfully served as CEO for several online gaming companies.

