

The live betting revolution continues

In-play sports betting has led the line in the online gaming industry for the past decade, but now new technological advances are poised to deliver even greater success with fresh demographics, explains **Ian Bradley**, chief product officer at multi-award-winning provider SBTech

IN-PLAY BETTING IS one of the most competitive battlegrounds for bookmakers, with players constantly demanding new ways to enjoy real-time action.

Almost 75 per cent of all bets are placed live, delivering between 50 and 80 per cent of online revenue, while a recent player survey showed that the range of in-play options is as important as special offers when it comes to choosing a betting site. Drawing inspiration from across the online sector, and leveraging the power of faster data transmission and analysis, the industry's top tech suppliers are now redefining the live experience.

Rising to the challenge

Offering in-play markets is a highly intensive process. During any given football match, SBTech generates hundreds of thousands of market updates and more than 43,000 price and status updates during the 90 minutes. Push notifications and page-specific data requests must also be handled for more than 60,000 events per month across dozens of sports.

And because live betting is driven principally by mobile, it requires features such as live streaming, stats and match trackers to deliver the complete experience, putting additional pressure on infrastructure.

The current priority for technology providers is to create more in-play opportunities during short betting sessions. Faster data feeds for quick-fire sports like snooker and darts will soon enable bets on individual shots and throws.

Smarter suspension logic, meanwhile, enables in-play markets to be frozen for shorter periods, such as pausing the 'next scorer' market when a specific player is about to take a penalty.

Sports and casino convergence

In-play betting and casino gaming increasingly go hand in hand, especially for casual players who want instant results. This is where gamification, both through innovative interfaces and novel rewards programmes, comes in.

Maximising time on site and LPV requires engaging customers more effectively, offering them timely opportunities on slots and live casino in between their sports bets. SBTech-powered operator Betser, for example, awards points according to the relative risk of each bet, which can then be exchanged for free bets or free spins.

Operators in regulated markets are also focused on appealing to younger players who have grown up with social media and P2P gaming. Marrying the different verticals, especially though eSports betting, will therefore be crucial to the long-term success of many operators.

The available markets in this new arena are currently very limited, but in the years ahead, we can expect to see an explosion in live eSports betting, with bet types on every imaginable action. However, if it is to become a true mass-market proposition, simpler, more viewer-friendly titles than the likes of League of Legends must take centre stage.

Staying on top of the action

Tailored betting journeys, built around individual player data, now allow the promotion of specific live betting opportunities based on previous selections and successes.

Action Betting, SBTech's new mobile-first feature, dynamically suggests quick-betting markets when a specific incident occurs,

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whether a free kick, red or yellow card, corner or dangerous attack.

The result of extensive research into live betting behaviour, Action Betting's machine-learning algorithm is designed to promote appropriate markets without being too intrusive.

Closer control

Online bookies must also provide features that enable players to take ever-greater command of all their activity. Flexible cash-out and bank-my-stake options on both pre-match and live markets are now at the core of most leading offerings.

Cash-out accounts for around three per cent of turnover across the sector, and unlocking the value of active bets has long been a goal for operators, allowing players with zero balance to continue their sessions without redepositing. SBTech's new Add2Bet feature takes the logic a step further – players can now add banker selections to an active bet that's open for cash-out, creating a new double, treble or acca using the same funds as the new stake.

With 2018 set to be a critical year across the iGaming industry, it can't be overstated that in-play innovation remains the key to achieving success. ■