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EDMONTON'S NEWSPAPER SINCE 1903

PROFESSIONAL SPORTS FORGE COSY RELATIONSHIPS WITH GAMBLING INDUSTRY

CURTIS STOCK Journal Sports Writer EDMONTON

In the world of sports betting, it doesn't get any bigger than Super Bowl Sunday.

Las Vegas casinos took in almost \$100 million on the Bears-Colts matchup, with some high rollers betting in the six-figure range. Internet gambling sites predicted even higher action — as much as \$600 million. Topping them all was the mega-millions wagered with illegal bookmakers.

Throw in money bet legally through government-sanctioned systems like Sport Select in Alberta and this one football game generated billions of dollars in wagers.

Without question, gambling on sports has seen phenomenal growth — and with it a blurring of the lines that have traditionally separated sports leagues, players and owners from the gambling

Starting today, The Journal examines many of the nuances of sports gambling in a five-part series called Games of Chance: Inside Sports Gambling.

The shift is dramatic, from an era not so long ago when sports distanced themselves from gamblers to today's downright cosy relationship between the two.

Gone, for instance, are the days when NBA commissioner David Stern considered denying Toronto a franchise unless basketball was taken off the Ontario government's sports wagering menu.

Now, NHL commissioner Gary Bettman tries unsuccessfully to link the



Part 1: Today The underground world of illegal bookies / Sports D1

Part 2: Sunday Match-fixing, point-shaving epidemic Part 3: Monday

Province addicted to profits Beneficiaries face moral dilemma Sport Select stacks odds in its own

Part 4: Tuesday

Addiction costs gambler everything Internet gambling explosion

Part 5: Wednesday What does the future hold?

66 Owners (of sports franchises) would take money from the devil if the money was high enough.99

Fay Vincent, former commissioner of Major League Baseball

future of the Pittsburgh Penguins to the Isle of Capri casino chain being awarded a licence to build a slot machine parlour and a new arena.

Gone also are the puritanical days when baseball banned retired Hall of Famers Mickey Mantle and Willie Mays from the game because they worked as greeters in an Atlantic City casino.

Now, the Edmonton Eskimos and several other CFL teams have a sponsorship agreement with Bowmans.com, an Internet gambling giant, and the league it-



self has a marketing agreement with a poker playing site called PokerStars.net.

"Who can be surprised that gambling shows up in sports more and more," says former Major League Baseball Commissioner Fay Vincent, who organized the 1989 investigation that banished Pete Rose from baseball. "Owners (of sports franchises) would take money from the devil if the money was high enough."

So what's the big deal? So what if In-

ternet gambling is helping to fuel a betting boom on sporting events? So what if a gambling firm sponsors a league or team? What possible harm could that

Plenty, as it turns out — to the integrity of the game, to the coaches and athletes who play the games and to those who bet on them.

Rose is a prime example. While managing the Cincinnati Reds in the 1980s,

it turns out Charlie Hustle, as he was known, was doing more hustling off the field than on it. Once an investigation determined he was betting on baseball, he was quickly banished from the game. Why? Because no league can afford the fallout when the integrity of their sport comes into question, when fans are left to wonder if matches are being fixed.

See GAMBLING / A3

Parkland students headfor the pool

Strike by teachers gives 9,500 students a break from their studies

> DAVID HOWELL Journal Staff Writer SPRUCE GROVE

Minivans filled the parking lot. Children, cast out of school by a teachers' strike, filled the pool.

The TransAlta Tri Leisure Centre was a hot ticket Friday, the first day of a strike by Parkland School Division teachers that shut 9,500 students out of classes. Leisure centre managing director Roger Smolnicky expected 3,500 visitors — more than double the 1,500 he sees on a normal weekday.

If the strike continues into next week,



Susan Brine takes her kids Dylan and Cole to the TransAlta Tri Leisure Centre in Spruce Grove on Friday

his staff will likely entertain 2,000 to 2,500 visitors daily, Smolnicky said. "We're going to try to keep them as

Susan Brine, who lives near Spring Lake, went for a swim with sons Dylan, 6, and Cole, 3, after Dylan's Grade 1 classes at Blueberry Community School were cancelled.

busy as possible," he said.

"Certainly I hope the strike doesn't take very long," Brine said, adding she has plans to help Dylan keep up with his

studies if the strike continues. "For me as a parent, it's a lot easier than some of the parents of high school students that are being affected," she said.

"I just don't want (the strike) to affect

the children." Negotiators with the school division and the Parkland teachers' local of the Alberta Teachers' Association didn't meet Friday.

However, leaders on both sides of the strike challenged each other to get back

to the table. The sides also traded blame for chil-

dren being out of their classrooms. "Our board's greatest fear has been manifested," grim-faced school board chairwoman Grace Gruber told re-

See STRIKE / A15

Royalty panel member holds millions in options

Retired Shell VP doesn't think he has a conflict

ARCHIE MCLEAN Provincial Affairs Writer EDMONTON

A member of the government's oil and gas royalty review panel still holds a few millions dollars' worth of Shell Canada stock options after Finance Minister Lyle Oberg's asserted the process would be free of industry influence.

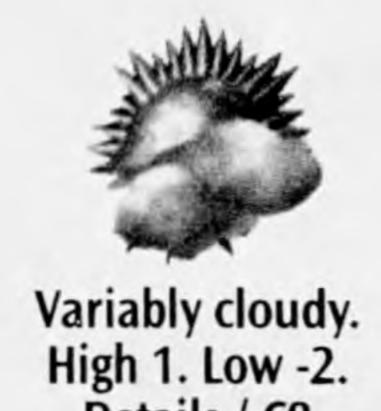
Sam Spanglet retired last May from Shell Canada as their vice-president Op-

erations, Oil Sands and president of Albian Sands Energy. He didn't want to disclose the exact value of his stock options, but said they are worth "a couple of million."

"I don't think there's a conflict of interest," Spanglet said. "I can see why some opposition parties would say it, I can understand it. But I don't believe this is the case, and the minister certainly doesn't."

See PANEL / A15

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Details / C8



A/News, Body & Health, Opinion B/CityPlus, Religion C/Culture D/Sports E/Life, Classified, Comics F/Business G/Marketplace H/ed I/New Homes

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Gaming now part of the game

CURTIS STOCK Journal Sports Writer EDMONTON

Not so long ago, the two couldn't have been more at odds.

Now, it appears one can't live without the other.

The relationship between sports owners, athletes and leagues and the gambling industry has never been cosier.

Here are a few examples:

Athletes

Flames forward Darren McCarty's gambling problems forced him into personal bankruptcy. Ex-NBA star Charles Barkley says he has lost about \$10 million gambling. In his book My Life in & Out of the Rough, golfer John Daly wrote he once took a \$750,000 check from a tournament in San Francisco, drove to Las Vegas, and promptly lost that and almost \$1 million more.

Ex- NHLer Rick Tocchet's involvement in the New Jersey gambling sting called Operation Slapshot has yet to be determined in court, more than a year after he was charged by police. Tocchet's alleged misdeeds while Wayne Gretzky's assistant coach in Phoenix (ones for which he has not yet been indicted) revolve around an illegal bookmaking operation for which a New Jersey state trooper has already been convicted and sentenced.

NHL players like Martin Brodeur, Sheldon Souray and ex-Oiler Georges Laraque participated in a televised, albeit charity, Texas Hold 'Em poker tournament.

Advertising

Last season the Canadian Football League had a marketing agreement with PokerStars.net while the Edmonton Eskimos, Calgary Stampeders, Toronto Argonauts and Hamilton Tiger-Cats had separate deals with gambling giant Internet Bowmans.com. Eskimo players wore a Bowmans logo on their practice jersey while a Bowmans sign was at field level. The Stampeders had a 10-foot by 30-foot Bowmans logo on their field. The Argonauts displayed Bowmans on their Jumbrotron, in one end zone and on the field.

Media

Newspapers carry betting lines on the sports pages. Before every NFL game the network's analysts give their best bets and selections.

Poker games are shown ad nauseum on a variety of TV networks, including all the sports channels. Poker columns run in newspapers.

Lotteries

The Saskatchewan Roughriders are the only CFL team benefiting from their own government-sanctioned lottery.

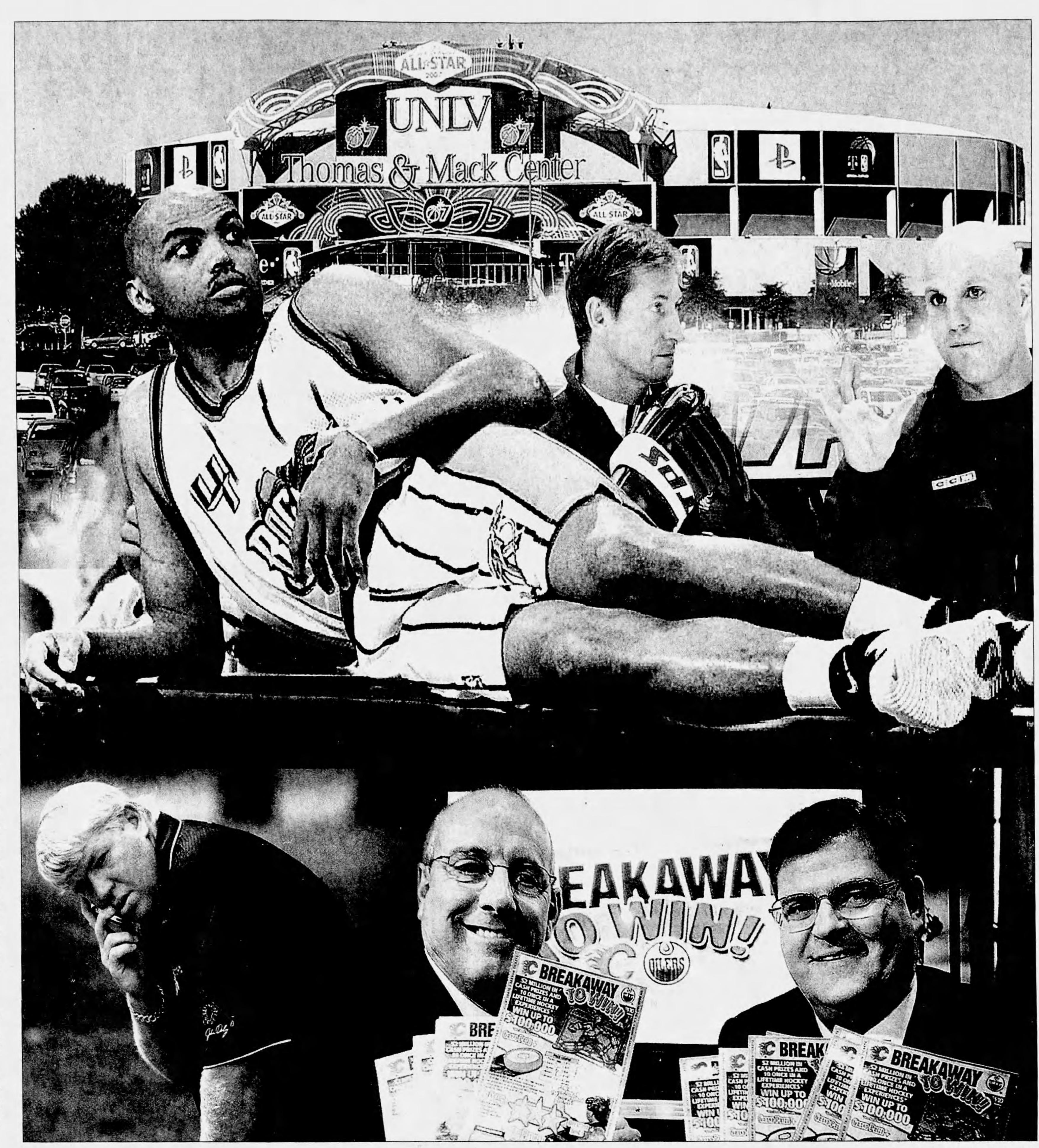
In the NHL, the Vancouver Canucks and the B.C. Lottery Corporation are on the same line. Through a multi-mil-'lion-dollar licensing agreement, B.C. Lotteries uses the Canucks to sell \$10 scratch-and-win tickets.

Previously, the Oilers and the Calgary Flames had their own agreement for a scratch-and-win ticket called Breakaway to Win, but that venture folded after three years.

Sin City

Las Vegas is home to the Calgary Flames' ECHL affiliate, the Las Vegas Wranglers, and the Los Angeles Dodgers Triple A farm team. The Los Angeles Kings and Colorado Avalanche played an exhibition game in Las Vegas before the start of this season and the city has held a dozen NBA

This weekend, the NBA all-star game is being held in Vegas. NBA Commissioner David Stern has said in the past that a franchise would never be located in Vegas as long as there was betting on basketball. Earlier this week, he seemed to soften his stance, saying it's ultimately the league's owners who call the shots.



Former NBA star Charles Barkley, top left, reckons he's lost \$10 million gambling. Former Phoenix Coyotes assistant coach Rick Tocchet, top right, was caught last year in a sports gambling sting. John Daly, bottom left, admits to massive gambling losses. Even the Edmonton Oilers had a brief fling with a professional hockey lottery, as announced in 2002 by CEO Patrick LaForge and former economic development minister Mark Norris, bottom right.

Sports gambling echoes steriod scandal

GAMBLING Continued from Al

Fixes are in the news today as much as ever, with soccer officials being bribed in Europe and South America in the past year. And some athletes are getting caught up in the adrenaline rush of betting themselves, then running up big debts and being forced to "settle" by helping to throw a game. Otherwise, says Michael Franzese, a former Columbo crime family captain and admitted match fixer, "They may meet up with a guy like me and that's not going to be pleasant for you."

"Sports ducked the issue of steroids, tried to sweep it under the carpet," says Arnie Wexler, a New Jersey counsellor of professional athletes. "Now it's gambling. You don't hear them talking about gambling because it's the forbidden fruit. If a player gets caught gambling, it

destroys the whole industry. "But now it's starting to hit them in the 66 Sports ducked the issue of steroids, tried to sweep it under the carpet. Now it's gambling. You don't hear them talking about gambling because it's the forbidden fruit. If a player gets caught gambling, it destroys the

Arnie Wexler, a New Jersey counsellor of professional athletes.

whole industry. 99

face. This is another steroid situation.

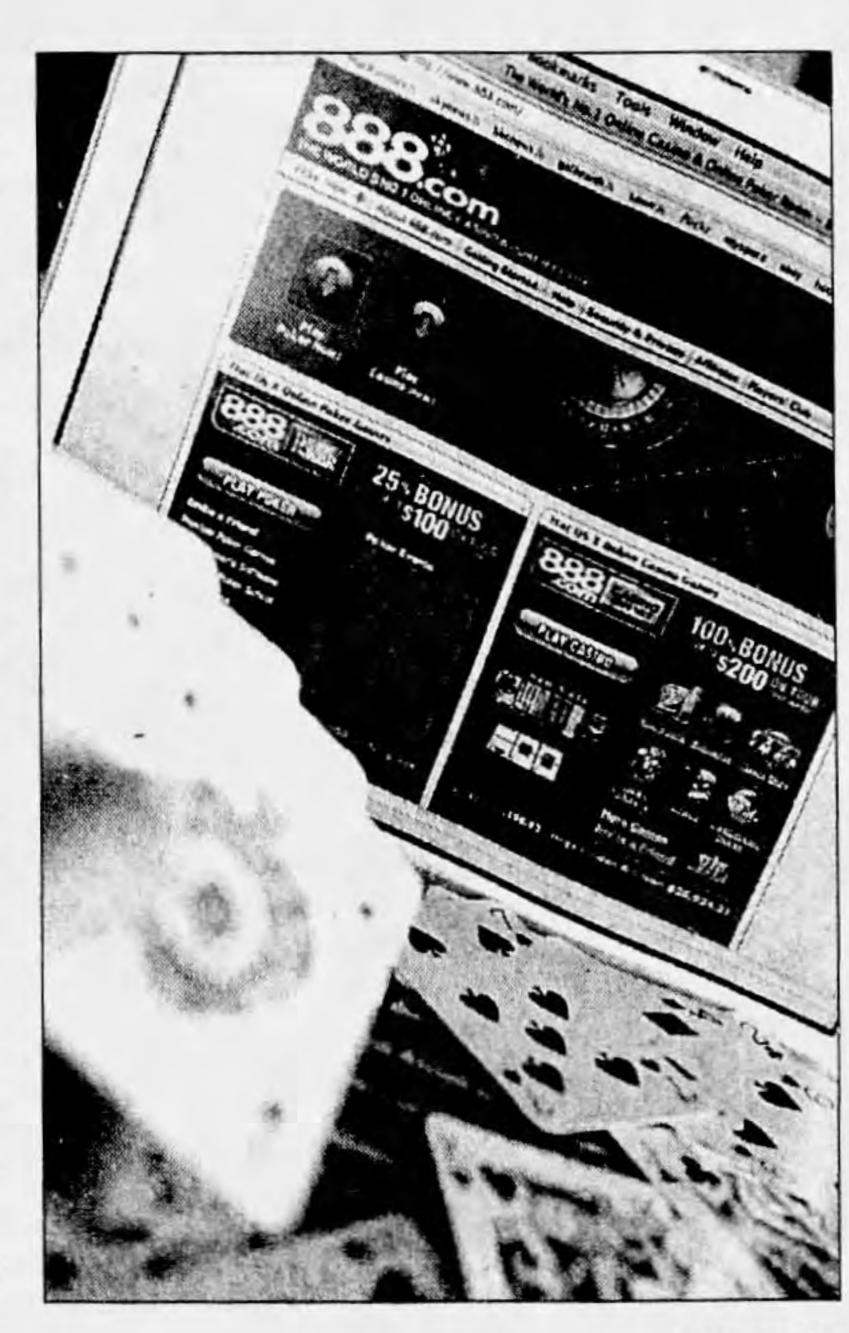
Just wait and you'll see." What else you'll see is the spike in sports betting and the ease of access to gambling websites fuelling an increase in problem gambling, not just by rich athletes, but by the average Joe sports

Like Edmonton's Gary Corbett. While the gambling industry salivates at the potential for profit every year at the Super Bowl, Corbett has very different memories of the big game.

Corbett wagered \$10,000 with a bookie on what he thought was a sure thing — Green Bay over Denver in the 1998 Super Bowl. The Packers lost, Corbett was out 10 grand, and a gambling addiction eventually cost him everything —his marriage, his business, his house,

his car — everything. "Gambling is a secret disease," says Wexler. "Compulsive gambling is an addiction like alcoholism and chemical dependency."

In addition to addictions and match fixing, over the next five days the sports and gambling series will look at the apparent hypocricy of government-sanctioned sports betting, the explosion of Internet betting, the world of illegal gambling and then ask, "What's next?" cstock@thejournal.canwest.com



The easy access provided by gambling websites is fuelling the problem.

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