

Watchdog Reviews Complaints About World Cup Betting Ads

Saul Rosen July 31, 2018



Photo by: Meghdad Madadi

Surely the World Cup was a great opportunity for gambling operators to acquire new customers but it looks some might have crossed the line in the UK.

(Newswire.net -- July 31, 2018) -- The Advertising Standard Agency has been called to assess if 'bet now' message broadcasted during matches has broken rules on problem gambling. ASA is the UK's advertising watchdog is looking into a number of complaints that have been received about World Cup ads run by some major operators that have potentially broke the new rules that were only launched few months ago to tackle the growing issue of problem gambling.

Viewers have filed a total of 115 complains during the 4 weeks of the 2018 World Cup. This is a high number if you consider that in the month before the complaints were 4 times lower. Gambling aggregator site CasinoBiggestBonus.com revealed that World Cup viewers in the UK had to 'digest' around 90 minutes of betting ads during the tournament.

Many complaints were made also because parents were unhappy about gambling ads running when a large number of children were watching. This was seen as a clear tentative to encourage them to start gambling.

But the main issue seems to be around some in breaks ads that offered improved odds for a short period of time. The ads were clearly encouraging viewers to 'bet now' to avoid losing the opportunity. ASA haven't officially released a statement yet but The Guardian have said that a spokesman of the agency said that the time sensitivity of odds may be well interpreted as a call to act. So the ads do have strong similarities with the message to 'bet in play, now' that was discouraged in the recent guidance published by the Gambling Commission.

The ASA is now assessing the complains to see if gambling companies have indeed broken the UK advertising code. The Advertising Agency will not comment on the number of ads present during the World Cup but it will indeed deliver a view if the betting ads that featured live odds break new rules introduced in February to address the issue of problem gambling.

The watchdog however has already said that promoting live odds is not prohibited but ads that will create an inappropriate sense of urgency are.

The majority of complains during the World Cup were as many viewers were not happy about gaming ads scheduled around programmes where it was certain a large majority of children will be watching. Many viewers found this behaviour completely inappropriate and irresponsible. Some other complains were about potentially misleading terms and conditions of offers.

In UK gambling companies are able to advertise before 9pm if they do so during live sporting events. Since the World Cup was live it is difficult that the watchdog will be able to find any wrongdoing as effectively gambling companies have not broken the rules.

Marc Etches, chief executive of GambleAware, has also expressed concerns that betting ads during live sports events could make gambling 'normalised' for younger viewers.

'Gambling is an adult activity but at the moment young people are growing up with it. It seems that this has gone too far and for many young people there is a stronger and stronger link between gambling and sport and I am concerned about it.'

Source: <http://newswire.net/newsroom/blog-post/00103132-watchdog-reviews-complaints-about-world-cup-betting-ads.html>