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PRESS RELEASE



IGRG ANNOUNCES ‘WHISTLE TO WHISTLE’ BAN ON GAMBLING ADVERTISING AROUND LIVE SPORT

The Industry Group for Responsible Gambling (‘IGRG’) has today announced major changes to its Gambling Industry Code for Socially Responsible Advertising (‘the code’). These changes have been brought forward as part of the code’s annual review process.

The changes include a ‘whistle to whistle’ ban on all TV betting adverts during pre-watershed live sport, starting five minutes before the event begins, and ending five minutes after it finishes. Additional measures include an end to betting adverts around highlight shows and re-runs, and an end to pre-watershed bookmaker sponsorship of sports programmes.

These changes, which will effectively stop betting adverts from being shown in commercial breaks during televised live sport, are expected to be introduced in the summer of 2019 and exclude horse and greyhound racing programmes. These measures are complementary to the additional restrictions that have been made by some broadcasters, which include limiting betting adverts during the ‘build up’ shows prior to live sport to one advert per break.

John Hagan, Chair of IGRG, said: *"Today the gambling industry is responding positively to public concerns about the amount of gambling advertising on television before the watershed. We are announcing a ‘whistle to whistle’ ban on gambling advertising during all televised live sport before the watershed, with the exception of horseracing and greyhound racing. We are also announcing a ban on any gambling advertising during re-runs of sporting events and highlight shows before the watershed. We believe that these new voluntary TV measures, which have been approved by the trade associations representing every sector of the gambling industry, will drastically reduce the amount of gambling advertising on television and they complement the strict controls that already govern gambling companies around advertising on digital platforms. We believe that this is itself a watershed moment as we strive to provide the ever, safer gambling environment which gambling consumers and the wider public expect, and which is so important to the future success and sustainability of our industry."*

Jeremy Wright MP, the Secretary of State Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport made the following statement: *"Gambling firms banning advertising on TV during live sport is a welcome move and I am pleased that the sector is stepping up and responding to public concerns. It is vital children and vulnerable people are protected from the threat of gambling-related harm. Companies must be socially responsible."*

Neil McArthur, Chief Executive of the Gambling Commission said: *“At our annual Raising Standards Conference last month I highlighted the need for industry to act together in response to public concerns about gambling advertising. Today’s announcement is a significant step forward in demonstrating that this is an industry that is starting to listen to its customers and the wider public. Importantly, it also demonstrates the value of collaborating across companies and across sectors to make gambling fairer and safer. I hope that this can be used as a model for future industry action to reduce and prevent harm.”*

Tom Watson, Deputy Leader of the Labour Party, said: *“This is an important first step in recognising that the proliferation of gambling adverts has got completely out of hand. It was imperative for the industry to accept there is a problem and they have done that today. The next step will have to be addressing the gambling adverts that children and vulnerable problem gamblers see online.”*

Anna Hemmings, CEO at GamCare, commented: *“For many people gambling is not a harmful activity, but for some it can become a serious problem. Many of our service users have told us that the volume of gambling advertisements on television and elsewhere is not helpful to them in maintaining their recovery, so the news that gambling advertising during live sporting events will be reduced is welcome. We would also welcome more research and discussion around the potential impacts gambling advertising can have on vulnerable people so that safeguards can continue to develop and protect people from future harms.”*

NOTES TO EDITORS

The Industry Group for Responsible Gambling is a collective body for the five key gambling trade associations in the UK to work together on collective issues around social responsibility. One of the key tasks for the group is to manage the voluntary cross-sector socially responsible advertising code.

The code was first introduced in 2007 and covers a range of areas which are designed to augment the comprehensive advertising regulatory regime which is overseen by the Advertising Standards Authority.

The intention is to re-publish the code in January with the changes announced today coming into force 6 months later.

The code already includes, for instance, provisions which:

- Prevent any online casino advertising before the 9.00pm watershed;
- Stop gambling sponsorships appearing on any children’s merchandise, including notably on replica football shirts;
- Include measures relating to online and social media marketing; and
- Requires all gambling adverts on television to carry a responsible gambling message and/or a reference to begambleaware.org throughout the length of those adverts.

The changes announced today strengthen the current code restrictions around pre-watershed TV advertising. They will serve to reduce the overall number of betting adverts on

TV and to prevent the concentration of betting adverts around live sporting events before the watershed.

This will be achieved by:

- The so-called 'whistle to whistle' ban on betting advertising prior to the 9.00pm watershed around all live televised sports (apart from horse and greyhound racing), with the ban commencing five minutes prior to the live broadcast of the game/match beginning and ending five minutes after it has finished.
- A complete ban on pre-watershed betting advertising on around the non-live broadcasting of sports (ie re-runs of events and highlights programmes).

The code changes will also apply to the live streaming of events (ie when sporting events that are being broadcast on television can also be viewed on mobile and other devices)

Additional information about the IGRG and a copy of the current code (4th Edition) can be found at igr.org.uk

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