



# NFL Draft Comes to Las Vegas:

## You Can BET It Will Be Fun

BY BRIAN SCROGGINS JR.

In April 2020, millions of National Football League (NFL) fans will flock to Las Vegas from around the world. While Las Vegas is used to having large crowds and blockbuster events, this will be the first time Las Vegas will host the NFL Draft. These fans will be coming to Las Vegas excited to enjoy the city but also eager to see who their favorite NFL team will select in the 2020 draft. The draft is an exciting time of year, as every fanbase has championship aspirations for the team they have been cheering for since they were children.

With so many fans in town for the draft, sportsbooks around the city will be competing for their time and money. One of the most effective ways to differentiate and draw patrons to a specific book is to offer bets and odds that are different from other establishments. Greeting you at any sportsbook will be bright, green lights consisting of traditional wagers (money line, spread, under/over, etc.) and non-traditional bets, known as proposition bets (prop bets).

### Origin of Prop Bets

These prop bets, or exotic bets, are great ways to get even the most casual fan interacting and betting on the games

while also offering some different action for the more-seasoned bettor. Simply put, a prop bet is a wager made regarding the occurrence or non-occurrence of an event during the course of a game that is not directly affecting the outcome of that game. Though these exotic bets have been around for many years, we can pinpoint Super Bowl XX as the game that gave them traction and popularity in the U.S.

Vegas bookmakers were looking to increase the betting handle for the big game and decided to offer 20-1 odds that William “Refrigerator” Perry would score a touchdown. That Sunday, the sportsbooks exploded with excitement as the 330-plus pound defensive lineman

rushed for a 1-yard touchdown. Although the bookmakers lost that bet, both the bettors and bookmakers won that day as the oddsmakers figured out that prop bets would entice the fans to stay at the casino property longer and increase their handle on the sporting event.

According to CBS,<sup>1</sup> one in 10 Americans is expected to place prop bets during the Super Bowl. While some of these prop bets are similar to the one mentioned above, regarding who will score a touchdown, they can also become a lot more exotic. From the color of Gatorade poured on the winning coach after the game or the length of the national anthem, these exotic bets

really do run the gamut.<sup>2</sup> While these exotic prop bets are not currently legal to wager on within the state of Nevada, the odds that some books assign to them are entertaining, and serve as great publicity.

### Prop Bets in the NFL Draft

With the NFL Draft coming to Las Vegas in 2020, we are sure to see a plethora of interesting prop bets offered by different bookmakers. The draft could arguably appeal to more audiences, as all 32 teams have representation and not just the two clubs competing for a Super Bowl title. With these 32 teams, bookmakers have the chance to allow bettors to put their “money where their mouth is” and let them place bets on who their team should draft.

While more conventional prop bets are available for the NFL Draft, the breadth of bets comes very close to that of the Super Bowl. Once again, these exotic bets can range anywhere from whether the drafted player will hug his mom or dad first, to the type of suit the player will wear when he walks on stage.<sup>3</sup> The creativity of the prop bet is only limited to what the books can come up with and what the Nevada Gaming Control Board (GCB) will approve.

### Approval Process of Prop Bets in Nevada

For many years, the GCB restricted prop bets to only include events on the field. Books operating legally within the state could only take money on bets sanctioned by the GCB. Many exotic prop bets were only available with offshore bookmakers. In the past decade, Nevada regulators have relaxed the restrictions and allow betting on post-season awards (Heisman Trophy, Super Bowl MVP, etc.) and limited eSports activities.

In 2018, the GCB began to allow bookmakers within the states to take wagers on what would happen in the NFL Draft.<sup>4</sup> In the approval notice, the GCB listed out more than 30 wagers that could be taken by sports books. Interestingly enough, only two of the approved bets allowed bettors to wager on where specific players will be drafted. The notice also included

the instructions to bookmakers that, “Any additional wagers which deviate from those listed below will require a separate application and approval.” This process of getting bets approved could take anywhere from a few weeks to a few months. As offshore books continue to offer different types of prop bets and in-game wagering, legal book makers must wait for the approval of the GCB before taking wagers on certain action.

### Opposition to Prop Bets

In her testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives on September 27, 2018, NFL Executive Vice President Jocelyn Moore asked to get rid of prop bets that involved the performance of the individual athlete during the course of a game.

“To address concerns regarding risky betting fixtures, we encourage Congress to allow professional and

amateur sports organizations to identify which types of bets simply pose too significant a risk to the integrity of sports and to work with regulators not to authorize them,” Moore said.

The U.S. Supreme Court repealed the Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act (PASPA) or the Bradley Act, which made sports wagering illegal in all but four states. Since then, the constant regulatory and legal discussion has revolved around what the leagues will do to ensure that the integrity of the game is kept intact. By allowing individual player performances to determine the outcome of a wager, some have argued that outside influences begin to play a bigger role into why an athlete under- or over-performed. Even if there is no foul play or outside pressure, a team employee or scout would have inside information that allows them to

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make a bet in real time before the sports books can adjust the line.

Now, it is important to note that sports books have the right to post these crazy prop bets but limit the amount they will take in the wager or even refuse to take any action at all. Prop bets are sometimes used primarily to get publicity rather than actually increase the action of a sports book. A popular prop-betting website, Odds Shark, even posted the odds on who would rule Westeros at the end of the popular HBO series “Game of Thrones.”<sup>5</sup> These odds are made for the fun of the consumer and have great entertainment value.

## Future of Prop Bets

In the 18-plus months since PASPA was overturned, the tech and innovation in sports wagering has quickly evolved. These growing areas include in-game betting of both traditional sports bets (money line, point spread, etc.) and prop bets. Once again, these innovations are focused on increasing viewership and handle. The innovators in this space are

waiting for the GCB, as well as other regulators, to give them the green light to allow these bets on mobile devices throughout the Silver State.

The GCB has reason to be hesitant with in-game prop betting. This branch of prop bets has its own set of difficulties. Courtsiding, the

practice of transmitting data or betting directly on sporting events as they happen in stadium, is a large problem in the international markets that currently have

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legalized in-game wagering, such as the United Kingdom. It arises as a result from the delay between the live action and television delay. Though that is the prominent problem, it is just one of many concerns for regulators.

At their core, prop bets are created and used to keep the consumer engaged in the event. They are used primarily by sporting events to keep people watching the game, even during an otherwise unentertaining game. We also see bookmakers offering odds on who will win awards in the entertainment industry<sup>6</sup> (Emmys, Oscars, etc.), which can get those events additional viewership they would not otherwise be receiving.

With Nevada transitioning from being the gaming capital of the world to the entertainment capital of the world, it is important that we keep in mind the regulatory process and how we must have “strict regulation of all persons, locations, practices, associations and related [gaming] activities.”<sup>7</sup> **NL**

1. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/betting-on-the-super-bowl-1-in-10-americans-placing-bets-on-super-bowl-liiii/>
2. <https://www.sbnation.com/nfl/2018/1/29/16941918/super-bowl-prop-bets-2018-pink-national-anthem-justin-timberlake-halftime-performance>
3. [https://www.nj.com/sports/2018/04/nfl\\_draft\\_2018\\_prop\\_bets\\_trades\\_sam\\_darnold\\_saquon.html](https://www.nj.com/sports/2018/04/nfl_draft_2018_prop_bets_trades_sam_darnold_saquon.html)
4. <https://gaming.nv.gov/modules/showdocument.aspx?documentid=13049>
5. <https://www.oddsshark.com/entertainment/game-thrones-prop-odds-bet-who-will-be-ruling-westeros>
6. <https://www.oddsshark.com/entertainment/primetime-emmy-awards-betting-odds>
7. Mission of Nevada Gaming Control Board



**BRIAN SCROGGINS JR.**

is a native Nevadan who is excited to be back in his hometown. In his time away, he attended the University of Kentucky, earning both his Juris Doctorate and Master of Business Administration degrees. He is currently enrolled in the LLM program at UNLV, studying gaming law and regulations. His research has focused on the areas of intellectual property, sports and gaming law. After graduating from UNLV in May 2020, Scroggins is looking to join a firm with strong mentorship and community involvement in Nevada. He can be reached at [brianscrogginsjr@gmail.com](mailto:brianscrogginsjr@gmail.com) or (702) 635-1884.

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