

▶▶ Talking Shop special

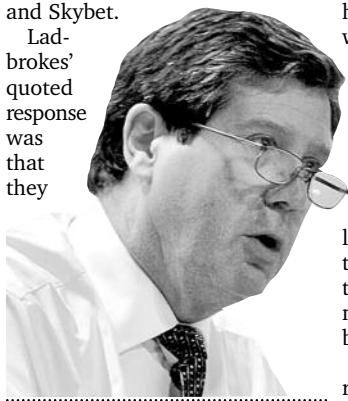
Credit card use an ongoing concern

▶▶From page 19 funds GamCare.”

FOBTs in betting shops have raised some concerns, but I like things that are entertaining, run to a low margin and have built-in safeguards such as restricting the speed of play and preventing the use of credit cards.

Focus has instead switched to the internet, where fewer controls exist and a sort of solitary madness can develop – such as with the accounts clerk earning £16,000pa who in 18 months bankrupted his company through losing over £1m with Ladbrokes and Skybet.

Ladbrokes' quoted response was that they



Tom Kelly: ABB chief executive

have “procedures in place to detect money-laundering and other crimes. But if an account-holder's money was paid in from a high street bank, account suspicions would not automatically be raised.” Hmm.

The police said: “The thing that astonished us was that he had no idea about the scale of it. It was not until the accounts were examined that the full extent was revealed. Everything he won he spent again.”

I don't pretend there are easy solutions, but the Gambling Commission might legitimately ask how bookmakers would now deal with similar cases. There are certain to be more.

The Remote Gambling Association says it has a code of conduct that requires its members, which include most leading bookmakers with online betting and poker sites, to have links to GamCare and facilities on their websites that allow customers to limit the amount of money they can gamble, and to be excluded from the sites.

However, *The Daily Telegraph* reports that: “There is political pressure on credit card firms to

place a cap on how much can be spent on internet gambling.”

Mike Weir, the SNP MP for Angus, has called for a limit of £1,000 a week and for sites to limit players to one credit card each. The Gambling Commission has suggested a two-card limit.

It is the thought of punters facing interest charges on credit card losses that is particularly dismaying, and the Gambling Commission is worried that the introduction of a legal avenue for recovering gambling debts may lead credit card firms to become less conservative in their lending.

Bookmakers may point out that over-regulation will drive punters towards non-regulated sites abroad, and that shop punters can always take out cash on their card from a high-street machine. That's true, but everyone knows betting via a card is less real than handing over hard cash. This is one area where the Gambling Commission's reservations are well-founded.

▶▶Anyone worried about a gambling problem should contact GamCare (www.gamcare.org.uk), 24-hour helpline 0845 6000 133.

Betfred restore Lucky 15 bonus

THE Bonus King is back! Punters dismayed by Betfred's decision to scale back their three-times-the-odds offer for a single winner in a Lucky 15 (and 31s and 63s) to twice the amount can rejoice. As of last week, the company reverted to its original deal (horses and greyhounds only, not football).

Fred Done says: “You have to listen to what punters are saying, and they didn't like the change. Some voted with their feet. It does cost us money [an estimate is around £2 million a year], and there was a view we were being silly in giving money away – but then we're not a plc, I don't have to listen to the accountants.”

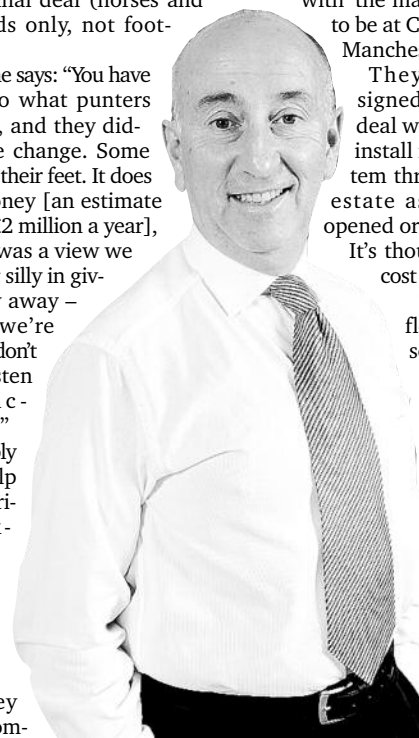
It probably did not help that some rival bookmakers, notably Coral, maintained the concession where they were in com-

petition with Betfred. And perhaps favourable World Cup results made the decision to revert back all the easier.

With 13 shop-fitting teams working round the clock, Betfred will reach 599 shops on Monday, with ‘the magic’ 600 due to be at Cross Street in Manchester.

They have also signed a two-year deal with Finsoft to install its EPOS system throughout the estate as shops are opened or refurbished. It's thought to have cost around £7m.

“We like the flexibility Finsoft provides, for instance printing up-to-date coupons in shops,” says John Haddock, MD of Betfred.



Fred Done: listens to his punters

48-hour decs move may cost racecourses dear

WILL the new era of 48-hour declarations really prove worth all the extra hassle, now that it's emerged that off-course bookmakers plan to base their payments to racecourses on the actual number of runners that take part, rather than the overnight fields they previously worked on?

Although racecourses are praying that a compromise may be reached, they face more frequently reduced payments for providing fewer than eight runners.

To me, it seems a fair enough penalty for taking their eye off their core market in favour of the vague ‘riches’ promised by the satellite stations holding overseas rights.

Search is on for Manager of the Year

THE search for the next *Racing Post*/SIS Manager of the Year was launched in last Thursday's newspaper – the competition having reverted to a regional basis with, for the first time, major companies being asked to provide nominations, while smaller independents will receive traditional entry forms from SIS.

Full details can be found on the home page of www.racingpost.co.uk. Queries can be sent to bettingshopmanager@racingpost.co.uk

Give a retired greyhound a good home

AFTER all the unfavourable publicity surrounding the ‘killing field’ of Seaham, John McCririck suggested that everyone should do more to help place retired greyhounds in good homes, as they make fantastic, loving pets.

Perhaps betting shops and SIS might help communicate this through posters and occasional ‘public service’ ads, directing people to the Retired Greyhound Trust (www.retiredgreyhounds.co.uk, tel: 0870 4440673).

▶▶BOYLESPO RTS' 100th shop will open in Capel Street, Dublin, on Thursday, August 10.

Ibas rules for Coral after unnoticed price cut hits punter

WITH the Gambling Commission charged with ‘ensuring fair play’ it will be interesting to see whether it backs Ibas in all its verdicts – which tend to be governed by the bookmaker's rules.

For instance, there was a recent, unusual case in which Ibas found against shrewd Swindon punter Edwin Milsom when he placed a series of bets totalling £700 at various Coral shops in Swindon,

on Real Sociedad to beat Villarreal in a Spanish league game at the end of April.

He used coupons with the original price of 100-30, but Coral had cut this an hour and a half earlier to 2-1 when learning that Villarreal were likely to field a weakened team because of their Champions League commitments.

His coupons went through un-

questioned until the final shop, where the manageress rang head office to check a £200 bet. Unfortunately the price was somehow mistakenly confirmed at 100-30.

Afterwards, Coral agreed to pay the full amount at that shop, but all the earlier bets were settled at 2-1 – a ‘loss’ to him of £666.

Ibas confirmed that this was

in accordance with the company's rules – because the coupon states that prices are subject to fluctuation.

Milsom is disappointed, arguing that had he known 2-1 was the current price he would not have placed any bets at all, that he was never in a position to make a choice, and how would he ever know what price he might end up with?

He also wondered how many other punters were affected – and what would happen were he able to take the case to court?

He has a point – and bookmakers should surely have the technology available to show the true price on punters' receipts.

Anyway, this is a case where cunningly splitting the bet up worked against the punter!

Ex-Post man Seeley having a PR ball as Betbrokers hits the ground running

NIGEL SEELEY, who has been associated previously with IG Index, Stan James and, initially, the *Racing Post*'s sports betting team, jokes that it's been a shock to his system having to do some hard work in his position as PR and marketing manager of Betbrokers.

“I've been here since January, but many of my previous duties involved PR – going out, meeting people and having a ball,” he says.

“Luckily, I've worked with some good people, picked a lot up on the way and I've enjoyed being more directly involved in marketing here.”

Betbrokers began in October and is designed for busy punters who want value but do not have the time to find it.

“We're a one-stop shop,” says Seeley. “If you wanted £500 on a horse, you ring us and leave the rest to us.”

“We'll shop around and get the best value, perhaps via a number of bookmakers. There's total client confidentiality, which is good for those in the public eye, and you have just the one account. You are never in the situation of trying to recall just which bookmaker took the bet.”

Seeley says they have between 500-600 active clients, with an average bet size of £700 – “which means we're generally at the top end of the market”.

He adds: “We charge three per cent and if a client has a yankee that's doing well, we will contact them to see if they wish to lay off for a guaranteed profit.

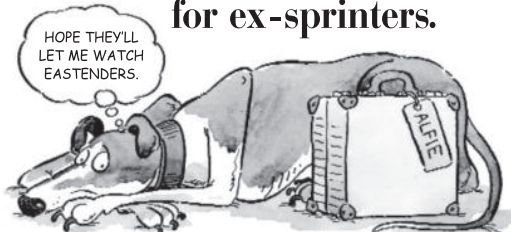
“We arrange for each client to have their own personal broker so that a good relationship builds up.”

“It will always be a niche product, but I'm glad I took the

plunge. The chairman, Wayne Lochner, is a real entrepreneur and great fun to be around.

“And there's still a bit of hospitality for me to get my teeth into.”

Retirement homes needed for ex-sprinters.



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