

Will Your Sportsbook Move Off A Key Number In Football?

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By Luken Karel

For gamblers, the crucial decision each weekend is whether to take or lay the number at their

favorite sportsbook. On the other side of the counter, the most critical determination for a sportsbook is when to move that number. Occasionally, these two disparate but linked disciplines conspire to offer bettors the potential for a wagering windfall.

A sportsbook will usually move a football line only after the maximum amount of money, an arbitrary figure called a "game limit," is reached on one side of a particular pointspread. Once that limit is achieved, the line is adjusted to attract action on the other side.

Let's say the Cheetahs are 8-point favorites over the Leopards in the Meow Bowl and the sportsbook's limit is \$5,000. If \$5,000 more is bet on the Cheetahs than the Leopards, the sportsbook moves the line from -8 to -8.5 or -9.

The risk of a sportsbook being middled – a situation where gamblers on both sides of a betting proposition win – is dependent on the likelihood of the game score coinciding with the game's pointspread. Over the past decade, the likelihood of a game being won by eight points was about two percent. Thus, a sportsbook that has reached the game limit can quickly flee from -8 to -9 with relative impunity.

Simple enough, huh?

Not so fast. All men may have been created equal but all numbers weren't. Some numbers, 7, 4, 6, and especially 3, must be treated differently by sportsbook management. These digits are known as "key numbers."

In his industry primer, *Race and Sportsbook Management, A Guide for the Legal Bookmaker*, Roxy Roxborough, the book's author and one of the planet's leading price makers, offers this recommendation: "In order to avoid middles – the house should move around 7, 4, and 6 on approximately 150 percent times the house limit and move around 3 on 200 percent times the house limit. If the house limit is \$5,000, then stick with 3 until there is a \$10,000 liability and stick with 7, 4 and

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6 until there is a \$7,500 imbalance on the number."

Roxborough, who taught a course in race and sportsbook management at the Clark County Community College in Las Vegas for five years, would preach to his students that any list of nightmares facing civilization would include:

1) Nuclear holocaust 2) Getting middled on 3

Most sportsbooks see it pretty much the same way.

"If a volcano went off in here I wouldn't move off 3," said one leading sportsbook operator.

"Who gets off 3?" wondered another sportsbook manager. "The whole world could shake and I'd still be at 3."

Well, you get the point.

The reluctance of a sportsbook to move off a key number such as 3 is founded in strong statistical evidence. About 14% of NFL games – roughly one in every seven – is decided by a field goal. That means that if a bettor can lay 2.5 and take 3.5, he has a substantial edge over the sportsbook. Bookmakers know this too, of course, and often will go to tortured lengths, including employing a money line, to avoid moving off 3.

In the first seven weeks on the 2005 NFL season, 31 of 102 games (30.3%) closed with one team favored by three points over another. So, while it may be increasingly difficult to find a 3–point middle, there are ample opportunities for a search.

Finding a middle on any of the other key numbers, 7, 4 and 6, is easier but only about half as profitable. Over the past decade, games decided by 7, 4 or 6 occurred about 7% of the time, each. Given the sportsbook edge of 4.55% inherent in every 11/10 wager, a punter either will have to be very patient or very lucky to show a profit betting those middles.

The bottom line? If you can find a middle on 3, bet it. Middles on 7, 4 and 6 also are worth a gamble but the bettor's edge is small. Tempting as it may be, it's probably wise to pass on all other numbers.

BETS AND PIECES: The most famous key number middle took place in the 1979 Super Bowl between the Steelers and Cowboys. Although Pittsburgh was a solid 4–point favorite at practically every sportsbook in Nevada, an industrious bettor could lay –3.5 on the Steelers with a Dallas bookie or take +4.5 on the Cowboys with a Pittsburgh bet taker.

But that would have meant placing a wager with an illegal bookmaker and nobody would do anything like that.

This article was written by Luken Karel for

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What Makes A Great Online Sportsbook

By Sebastien Veilleux

All sportsbooks were not created equal. The Internet has given us unprecedented choice when it comes to betting on sports online. I am going to list a few of my must-have items for online sportsbooks. Does your current sportsbook have these features? If not, perhaps it's time to check around for a new sportsbook.

Feature One: Security

It all starts and ends with security. If an online sportsbook is not secure, there's nothing else to talk about. For security, I look at a couple things. Is the online sportsbook licensed and regulated by a government entity? I want to make sure there's some sort of bond backing up the actions of the sportsbook. Another key point is Internet security. Is the sportsbook using the latest and greatest in security methods? I certainly don't want to deposit my money just to find all my personal financial information spread around the Internet a week later.

Feature Two: Depositing Methods

An online sportsbook absolutely must have many depositing options. For me, the critical one is 3rd party options, like NETeller. Using a 3rd party depositing service like NETeller or FirePay should be like second nature for anyone gambling online. Rather than spreading your vital financial information to many parties around the web, use one source to handle your money. Once you have money in NETeller or FirePay, you can simply send money back and forth to many online sportsbooks. As far as I am concerned, you should never do things any differently.

Feature Three: Action

You might be surprised to learn this, but not all sportsbooks have the same events up for betting. Take horse racing for instance. Many sportsbooks fall short in this category. Another area where

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sportsbooks vary in prop bets. If you love prop bets or future bets, it's best to shop around for multiple sports books. It's very rare to find one sports book that has it all. Usually, you think they have it all until you find another sportsbook with other options. In the old days, Vegas sports bettors would have to drive around town looking for a good deal. Today, you can just click over to multiple online sportsbooks and find the deal you want.

These are three very important features. They are must-have features for me. Online sportsbooks come big and small. The competitive winning sports bettor will want to have accounts at a few or more to get the best deals and the most action. Before jumping into any online sportsbook, do your research, and make sure the online sportsbook is reputable. Research is becoming very easy these days as there are sites setup specifically for this purpose.

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