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YA WANNA BET?

OddsShark site helps you level the playing field when betting on sports

Odds are that you will watch the Super Bowl tomorrow. It may not be a sure thing, but it's a pretty safe bet. It's the most watched event on American television year after year, with more than 100 million viewers. And many of those viewers will have some money at stake on the game.

I'd wager that people have been gambling on sports since the first sport was invented. The Super

Bowl is a huge gambling event that will generate an estimated \$4.2 billion in bets this year, many of them illegal.

If you're an "avid" gambler (remember, admitting a problem is the first step in getting help), or just like to make the big game more interesting, **OddsShark.com**, can give you the information you need to increase your odds of winning.

The site is a clearinghouse of odds, information and advice for gambling on all sorts of sports from around the world. It covers college and professional sports, including football, basketball, baseball, boxing, tennis, horse and auto racing and more. Of course there's an entire section of the site devoted to the Super Bowl.

For most people, gambling on the big game involves picking a square on a grid for \$10 with a group of co-workers or friends, and hoping you get good numbers. If your team is in the game you might place a small bet on the out-

come with a friend.

It turns out that these types of friendly wagers barely scratch the surface of the many ways you can lose money while watching the game. If you're a more "advanced" gambler (you can quit whenever you want) you're already familiar with betting the point spread, the over/under and the moneyline. OddsShark explains all of these for the uninitiated.

May I make a proposition?

The most interesting bets covered on the site are the proposition bets, or props. According to the site, these bets became popular in the 1980s when casinos were looking for ways to draw in more bettors. A Vegas oddsmaker opened a bet on whether legendary Chicago Bears player William "The Refrigerator" Perry would score a touchdown in Super Bowl XX. The huge, lumbering defensive lineman had become a fan favorite by scoring on multiple trick plays during the Bears' championship season that year. When Perry did indeed score a TD in the big game, props really took off.

Props allow you to bet on almost anything remotely related to the game. The coin toss is one of the more popular prop bets. The odds are truly 50/50 on this one. It's come up heads 24 times and tails 25 times in 49 Super Bowls. Teams who have won the toss have won 24 of the 49 games, 12 with heads and 12 with tails.

You can bet on the length of the national anthem, player stats, what team will score first, what player will score first, whether the

first score will be a touchdown, field goal or safety, and even the color of the Gatorade that will be dumped on the winning coach. Orange is the odds-on favorite going into the game.

The props get even sillier. How many times will Cam Newton do the open shirt Superman thing? Will Left Shark make an appearance at halftime? How many wings will Buffalo Wild Wings sell? How many times will the Golden Gate Bridge be shown? It seems people are willing to lose their money on almost anything.

The site is nicely designed, with an eye toward the "serious" gambler (baby needs new shoes). A wealth of odds, statistics and information are readily accessible. A nice color palette, unified typography, good art and graphics, engaging writing and intuitive navigation all make for a pleasant browsing experience.

OddsShark is not an online option for actually placing bets. It just provides information to help you decide how to bet. It's not clear to me if online sports betting is legal or not in Pennsylvania. Based on a review of several gambling sites, there is no law that declares it legal, but there is no law that declares it illegal either. The sites all cover themselves by declaring they are not lawyers, and you should consult an attorney before betting on sports online. Or go to Vegas. Enjoy the game and gamble responsibly!

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