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Sports-betting power players: Meet the 27 top executives pushing the US gambling industry forward in 2021

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Adam Greenblatt, Sara Slane, Adi Dhandhania, and Jason Robins. BetMGM; Courtesy of Sara Slane; Courtesy of Adi Dhandhania; DraftKings; Shayanne Gal/Insider

- Insider is recognizing the execs pushing the legal sports-gambling industry forward in the US.
- We are highlighting 27 leaders at entities from DraftKings to the NFL.
- The list includes execs from stakeholders such as operators, media firms, and suppliers.

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Sports betting is blossoming in the US, as more states and neighboring Canada expand legal gambling.

The boom, which started in 2018 after the US overturned a federal ban on sports wagering, has driven a [flurry of M&A activity](#) between gambling operators, sports-media companies, suppliers, and other stakeholders. And it's led investors including venture-capital firms and blank-check companies to jump into the space.

For [the second year](#), Insider is highlighting leaders who are pushing the legal sports-gambling industry forward in the US.

We [previously spotlighted 22 pioneers](#) who had staked their claim in the nascent industry. They included Ted Leonsis, a team and venue owner who opened the first sportsbook in a major US sports arena; Barstool Sports CEO Erika Nardini, who later sold a stake in the sports-media company to casino operator Penn National Gaming; and former NFL executive Jocelyn Moore, who helped craft the league's guiding principles for legal gambling.

This year, we're featuring 27 executives who have made demonstrable strides in the sports-betting space and are helping to grow the industry.

In some cases, we selected the most powerful executive within the organization, such as BetMGM CEO Adam Greenblatt and DraftKings chief Jason Robins. In others, we highlighted leaders responsible for key sports betting initiatives like Edward Hartman, the Fox executive leading its relationship with sportsbook Fox Bet. Other honorees are in unique positions of influence in the industry, like Sightline Payments cofounder Omer Sattar.

Methodology

We [sought executives](#) who were driving the sports-betting strategies at their organizations, and had demonstrated success in the last year.

We relied on a mix of our own reporting, nominations from readers, and conversations with industry experts to narrow down the finalists. We chose them based on their roles and responsibilities, the scope and success of the strategies they introduced in the last year, and their overall impact on the industry.

The list includes executives from many corners of the sports betting ecosystem including leaders from the major sports leagues, gambling operators, sports-media properties, industry suppliers, and advisors.

The power players are listed in alphabetical order, by last name.

Chris Bevilacqua, CEO, Simplebet



Simplebet CEO Chris Bevilacqua. Simplebet.

Chris Bevilacqua thinks the future of sports betting are micro-bets on one moment of a game to the next, like who will score next basket or how many free throws a player will make during their next trip to line.

His sports-betting tech company, Simplebet, works with sportsbooks including FanDuel on those kinds of live-betting products, as well as with free-to-play apps like the MLB's Rally App.

Bevilacqua, who also advises sports and entertainment companies through his firm Bevilacqua Helfant Ventures, helped Simplebet raise \$50 million from investors including former Turner Sports president David Levy and Jim Murren, the former CEO of MGM Resorts. The startup most recently announced a \$15 million round in March.

The CEO believes Simplebet's breed of in-play gaming can unlock the promise of sports betting to keep fans glued to games.

CNBC reported that Intralot, an operator in DC and Montana, used Simplebet during the NFL playoffs and Super Bowl. Bevilacqua told the publication that nearly 25% of all Intralot's NFL bets that month were from Simplebet's micro-bet offerings, suggesting it is drawing in fans.

The company also told Insider that FanDuel's free-to-play game PlayAction, which uses Simplebet, recorded an average of 45 bets per user during one particular Thursday Night Football last fall. That's a lot of bets.

Adi Dhandhania, SVP, strategy and interactive, Bally's Corporation



Adi Dhandhania. Adi Dhandhania

Adi Dhandandia is a key player behind Bally's Corporation's push into sports gambling.

The legacy casino operator took significant steps in the past year to raise its profile among sports bettors and improve its wagering technology.

Dhandandia has been at the center of it all.

The SVP of strategy and interactive was responsible for Bally's \$125 million acquisition of the sports-betting platform provider Bet.Works. He executed its 10-year deal with Sinclair Broadcasting Group that puts the Bally's name on 21 of the media company's regional sports-networks. He was involved in the acquisitions of daily-fantasy-sports player Monkey Knight Fight and free-to-play gaming provider SportCaller. And he's overseen the company's partnerships with leagues including the NHL, NBA, and MLB.

Dhandandia joined Bally's in 2019, when it was still called Twin Rivers Worldwide Holdings. The regional-casino owner bought the Bally's hotel and casino brand from Caesars Entertainment in 2020, and took the name for the combined company.

Dhandandia was previously an executive at the former SoftBank subsidiary BrightStar Corp. and at the gaming company IGT.

Marissa Coleman, Shane August, and other advocates for Maryland's sports betting bill



Marissa Coleman. Marissa Coleman

Maryland recently legalized sports betting, and took the rare step of including language in its bill that prioritized minority and women-led business.

The bill, which was signed into law by Governor Larry Hogan in June, opens the door for many kinds of businesses including restaurant and bars to obtain mobile betting licenses, rather than the usual casinos, race tracks, and other gaming companies where diversity is often lacking. It also encourages the commission reviewing applications to consider giving early market access to minority- and women-owned entities.

Alongside Maryland lawmakers, a handful of key local advocates helped gain crucial support for the legislation in Maryland, particularly the elements that make the bill more inclusive.

WNBA player and entrepreneur Marissa Coleman was integral in gaining voter support for the referendum that would legalize sports wagering, as chairwoman of the campaign "Vote Yes on Question 2." Her main goal with the campaign was to make sure part of the tax revenue from gambling would go toward education, which it will.

She also spoke before the Maryland General Assembly to call on lawmakers structure the bill in a way that would encourage bids by women and minorities.

"I also saw this as an opportunity to open doors and diversify the sports betting industry," Coleman told Insider. "This was a generational opportunity for the state of Maryland, and its economy."

Coleman has continued kicking open doors in sports betting. She's joining Delmock Entertainment, the minority partners of The Riverboat on the Potomac, which struck a deal with PointsBet to operate a sportsbook in the state. She'll be Delmock's VP of marketing.

Shane August, the founder of Handle 19, advocated to get language in the bill that would prioritize minority and women-owned businesses as well. He also gave testimony before the Maryland General Assembly.

August, a former college athlete, grew up in New Orleans and told Insider that legal or not, betting on sports is part of the urban experience. He also called on lawmakers in DC and Virginia to include elements in their sports-wagering bills that would benefit women, minorities, and small businesses.

August, an entrepreneur, is also trying to open an independently owned sportsbook in DC. He's hit roadblocks finding a location, but told Insider he isn't deterred. He's scouted a location in DC's downtown central business district and plans to file another application for a license in July.

Other leaders in Maryland also campaigned alongside Coleman and August.

Local business leader Charles Hopkins was part of the advocacy effort, testifying in favor of language that would encourage participation of minority business enterprises. Justin Ross, a lobbyist and former member of the House of Delegates, helped organize the drive. And representatives from the Washington Football Team and the Riverboat on the Potomac lobbied as well.

Michael Daly, CEO, Catena Media



Michael Daly. Catena Media

Affiliates have been lapping up the the marketing dollars spent by sportsbooks to acquire customers. CEO Michael Daly has claimed a spot for his Catena Media at the well.

Catena owns sites including Legal Sports Report, TheLines.com, and PlayUSA.com in the US, which publish betting news, odds, and other information, and make money mainly by linking to sportsbooks that pay for Catena for its referrals.

In May, Daly bolstered Catena's affiliate portfolio through the \$39.6 million acquisition of Lineups.com, a player and game statistics site.

Catena is publicly listed in Stockholm, Sweden, but Daly's focus has largely been North America.

Before being promoted to CEO in March, Daly, who's based in Las Vegas, led the company's operations in North America, and in the US before that. He's been with Catena since 2018.

Catena reported an 53% year-over-year lift in revenue to 40.7 million euros during the first quarter that ended March, which the company attributed to organic revenue growth in North America.

Lloyd Danzig, founder, Sharp Alpha Advisors



Lloyd Danzig. Lloyd Danzig.

Lloyd Danzig is an M&A and startup advisor in the sports-betting industry.

Through his firm Sharp Alpha Advisors, Danzig works with sports franchises, leagues, and media brands on their sports betting and innovation strategies. His specialty is in startups companies should partner with or acquire.

He's also invested in several startups, including the video-game wagering company Players' Lounge and sports-betting intelligence firm TRNDS Sports. The latter sold to Fansure last year.

Most recently, Danzig closed a venture fund dedicated to the sports-betting industry, Insider confirmed with several investors in the fund.

He is also a mentor with Techstars and the sports-tech accelerator Lead Sports.

Chris Dougan, chief communications officer, Genius Sports



Chris Dougan. Genius Sports

Genius Sports manages the rights to official data from sports leagues and other organizations, which it feeds to media and gambling partners to bolster their analysis and odds.

The UK-based company has made a splash in the US under the leadership of chief communications officer Chris Dougan.

Dougan joined the sports data and tech provider in 2015 to build out its US operations and make inroads in Washington, DC, where the federal ban on sports gambling would later be overturned.

Dougan still leads Genius' relationships with lawmakers, leagues, sportsbooks, and other stakeholders, as communications chief.

He was integral to the company's communications with investors as it went public in the US in April, through a merger with blank-check company dMY Technology Group Inc. II.

Earlier that month, he also handled the news that Genius had snagged a data rights deal with the NFL, solidifying it as a power player in the sector. The NFL previously had a data deal with rival Sportradar.

Eric Foote, chief commercial officer, PointsBet USA



PointsBet USA chief commercial officer Eric Foote. PointsBet USA

Australian bookmaker PointsBet has been pounding the pavement to make itself a household name among sports gamblers in the US.

In the past year, US subsidiary PointsBet USA has struck partnerships with sports leagues including the NHL, PGA Tour, and WNBA; various sports teams; and NBCUniversal, which took an ownership stake in the gambling operator as part of a \$500 million marketing tie-up.

Eric Foote, the chief commercial officer, has been the main driver behind these deals, under CEO Johnny Aitken who was featured in Business Insider's last power player's list.

Foote leads all of the PointsBet's negotiations with teams, leagues, and media properties.

He was key to the NBCUniversal deal, in particular, having joined PointsBet in 2020 from the media side of the sports industry.

Foote was most recently a VP of business development at CBS Sports Digital, where he crafted a sports betting strategy for CBS Sports among other work.

Will Funk, EVP, Sports Partnerships and Branded Content, Turner Sports



Turner Sports exec Will Funk. Turner Sports

Will Funk spearheads Turner Sports' sports betting strategy across all of its properties, including its TV channels and digital-media brand Bleacher Report.

As head of sports partnerships and branded content, Funk oversees gaming-related partnerships across Turner's league and property rights.

That includes Turner's latest deal with sportsbooks DraftKings and FanDuel to integrate their betting information into its content, in exchange for referral fees if gamblers place bets through those platforms. Funk also has a hand in Bleacher Report's gambling vertical, B/R Betting, and content studio within Caesars Entertainment's flagship Las Vegas hotel.

The WarnerMedia-owned operation is slicing and dicing its relationships with various gambling operators, as the industry seeks media partners to help acquire customers.

Funk has also overseen Turner's experiments with sports betting content, including its "TNT Bets" gambling show that streamed during the NBA Finals.

He has been Turner since 2002, and worked at the NBA before that.

Kenny Gersh, EVP, business development, MLB



MLB EVP Kenny Gersh. MLB Photos.

Major League Baseball is one the biggest embracers of sports betting among the major sports leagues.

It's forged relationships with numerous sportsbooks, produced shows for bettors sponsored by gambling operators, and cut content deals with wagering affiliates, under the leadership of Kenny Gersh.

Gersh is the league's EVP of gaming and new business ventures.

He led the MLB to partner with sports-betting operators including DraftKings, FanDuel, BetMGM, Fox Bet, Bet365, Intralot, and TheScore.

He also oversaw the launch of "Bettor's Eye," a series with BetMGM, and MLB's content deal The Action Network, a sports-media outlet that caters to gamblers.

Gersh started out at MLB in 2002 in its interactive unit, MLB Advanced Media, which later sold off a chunk of the business to Disney. He moved over to MLB in 2018 to head up its gaming and new business ventures team.

Gersh was previously at CBS Sports Digital and at Sports Line before and through its acquisition by CBS. He was also an associate at two major law firms.

Adam Greenblatt, CEO, BetMGM



BetMGM CEO Adam Greenblatt. Adam Greenblatt

BetMGM started off slow in the US market, but has since become a top gambling operator in multiple states including Colorado, Tennessee, and Michigan.

CEO Adam Greenblatt runs the joint venture between MGM Resorts and European gaming operator Entain.

He created BetMGM in 2018 while at Entain, as director of corporate development and strategy. The sports betting platform originally launched in New Jersey as PlayMGM, but rebranded as BetMGM in September 2019 with a new and improved gaming app.

Greenblatt has been a key figure in BetMGM's partnerships with media companies, which are designed to infuse the brand into betting content and get it in front of more gamblers. Its partners include Yahoo Sports (which BetMGM powers a sportsbook for), The Athletic, and audio company Audacy.

Greenblatt also pushed BetMGM to expand into more states where sports gambling is legal. It's currently in 11 markets, launching most recently at National's Park in Washington, DC.

Before Entain, formerly called GVC Group, Greenblatt worked at British bookmaker Ladbrokes and financial-advisory firm Rothschild.

Chris Halpin, chief strategy and growth officer, NFL



Chris Halpin. NFL

Chris Halpin is the top sports-betting executive at the NFL, overseeing the league's strategy in legal gambling.

As chief strategy and growth officer, Halpin is responsible for the how the league monetizes sports betting.

He's also involved with the internal discussions around how much gambling content media partners can have around NFL games; is a key liaison with lawmakers in Washington, DC; and oversees the league's responsible gambling initiatives.

The NFL initially resisted efforts to overturn the federal ban on sports betting, which was repealed in 2018. But the league has softened its stance on legal sports betting.

In April it announced its first official sportsbook partners, which include Caesars Entertainment, DraftKings, and FanDuel. (Rene Anderson, chief revenue officer and EVP of NFL partnerships, also worked on those deals.)

And Halpin told Sportico around that time that the league was considering allowing legal sports-betting media integrations and ads during NFL games next season, using frequency-capping to prevent it from overwhelming fans who don't gamble.

The NFL is one of the most legally wagered on sports in America.

Halpin, who previously oversaw licensing and consumer products at the NFL, joined the league in 2013 from Providence Equity Partners.

Edward Hartman, SVP, Corporate Development, Fox



Fox exec Edward Hartman. Fox

Edward Hartman oversees Fox Corporation's sports-gambling interests.

The legacy media company was an early mover in sports betting. It partnered in 2019 with gaming operator The Stars Group to create a sportsbook under its brand called Fox Bet.

The sportsbook, which is available in four US states, hasn't captured market share as quickly as industry leaders DraftKings and FanDuel. But the brand's free-to-play app, Fox Bet Super 6, has grown to more than 4.5 million users with promotional help from Fox's media properties. It's been praised as a customer-acquisition channel by both Fox and Flutter, the gaming company that acquired The Stars Group and owns FanDuel.

Fox also has options to take 50% ownership stake in Fox Bet and a 18.6% stake in FanDuel, which would give it a sizeable ownership interest in sports gambling should it exercise them. (Fox is currently in a legal dispute with Flutter over the price Fox would have to pay for that FanDuel option.)

Hartman, who serves at SVP of corporate development, had a hand in Fox's May acquisition of OutKick, which added to the Fox Sports-owner's gambling assets and personalities.

Hartman is also part of the team driving Fox Sports' push into horse racing. The sport held steadfast as other live sports were halted amid the pandemic. And Hartman helped forge a recent deal with the New York Racing Association that includes expanded media rights and 25% equity option in the organization.

Before Fox, Hartman worked in corporate development at 21st Century Fox and in M&A at News Corp. He also had a long career at UBS earlier on.

Chris Holdren and Eric Hession, co-presidents of Caesars Sports and Online Gaming, Caesars Entertainment



Chris Holdren (left) and Eric Hession (right). Caesars Entertainment

Caesars Entertainment, a staple on the Las Vegas strip, has poured resources into boosting its sports betting operations in the last year.

Chris Holdren and Eric Hession are leading the charge as co-presidents of Caesars Sports and Online Gaming.

The US casino operator closed in April a \$4 billion takeover of UK gambling operator William Hill to expand in online sports betting. It bought a stake in daily-fantasy-sports startup SuperDraft, which offers Caesars access to a database of sports fans it could try to monetize through wagering. And it scored one of three slots as an official sportsbook partner of the NFL, beginning with the 2021 season.

Caesars merged in 2020 with Eldorado, creating a massive US casino company, and spurring some of these sports-betting initiatives.

Under Holdren's and Hession's direction, Caesars also deepened its sports-betting relationship with ESPN, unveiling a new studio in Caesars' The Linq Hotel + Experience, where sports betting show "Daily Wager" now shoots.

Caesars opened a sportsbook in Monumental Sports & Entertainment's Capital One Arena as well, marking the first sportsbook inside a US pro-sports venue.

Holdren, a former Handy HQ, Starwood Hotels, and Disney executive, joined Caesars in 2017 as its chief marketing officer. Hession spent much of his career at Caesars, climbing the ranks to become its financial chief before taking on his current role alongside Holdren.

Jon Kaplowitz, SVP, interactive gaming, Penn National Gaming



Penn National Gaming head of interactive Jon Kaplowitz. Penn National Gaming

Jon Kaplowitz leads Penn National Gaming's interactive division. He was a key player in the regional-casino operator's 2020 acquisition of Barstool Sports and launch of the Barstool Sportsbook.

Kaplowitz, SVP of interactive gaming, oversees the online sportsbook, as well as Penn's other online gaming products including hollywoodcasino.com.

He's leveraged Barstool's brand and personalities to help Penn compete in mobile gambling without spending as lavishly to acquire customers as players like DraftKings, which have spent hundreds to acquire each new customer.

The company says it's been able to keep marketing costs for the sportsbook down by using Barstool Sports to promote the platform.

As of March, Penn reported the Barstool Sportsbook had captured roughly 13% of the handle, or overall amount wagered, in Pennsylvania and Michigan.

Kaplowitz joined Penn from Comcast, where he spent nearly eight years focused on new business growth.

Scott Kaufman-Ross, SVP, head of gaming & new business ventures, NBA



NBA SVP Scott Kaufman-Ross. NBA

The National Basketball League has moved more aggressively into sports betting than almost any other major sports league, with the help of Scott Kaufman-Ross, the league's SVP and head of gaming and new business ventures.

Kaufman-Ross, who was featured in our last list for his lobbying efforts, more recently led the NBA's strategic push into betting content.

The NBA in May debuted a show called NBA Bets on its NBA TV network. Its website and app now have sections for betting content. And it enlisted media partners included Turner Sports, Bleacher Report, Yahoo Sports, and The Action Network to contribute to the content.

The league has also experimented with betting-focused streams of games in recent seasons.

Its Kaufman-Ross's job to strike a balance between embracing betting and the revenue streams it opens for the league and its partners, and inundating fans with gambling advertisements or analysis that could alienate those who won't wager.

"We recognize that there is a financial opportunity for us and our teams and our broadcast partners," Kaufman-Ross told Sports Business Journal in March. "We acknowledge that. But we do have to strike a balance, because if it gets out of control the over-corrections will come."

Kaufman-Ross has been at the NBA since 2011, most recently as its head of its fantasy and gaming. He also spent a few years on the global strategy team, among other roles. He was research analyst at Goldman Sachs before that.

Kip Levin, CEO, Fox Bet



Fox Bet CEO Kip Levin. FanDuel Group.

Fox Bet CEO Kip Levin is in charge of integrating the gambling operator into the broader umbrella of the FanDuel Group.

FanDuel-owner Flutter bought the Fox-branded service's parent company The Stars Group for \$12.3 billion in 2020. (Fox, which took a 5% stake in Stars as part of the Fox Bet deal, got a roughly 2.5% stake in the combined Flutter-Stars business when the companies merged.)

Levin took the reins of Fox Bet in August, after serving as FanDuel Group's president and operating chief and CEO of horse-racing network TVG.

He did so during a hectic time that included the kick off of the NFL season, a crucial period for both sports betting and partner Fox, which broadcasts NFL games. Levin also leads Fox Bet's relationship with Fox in his current role.

While Fox Bet has captured market share in the US, it generates a fraction of the revenue of FanDuel, which has rolled out in more markets.

Flutter reported last quarter that, of the \$396 million in revenue generated from its US operations, FanDuel accounted for 91.6% of that, while Fox Bet, which includes PokerStars US business, made up just 8.4%.

But, Levin has successfully grown Fox Bet's Super 6 free-to-play app to more than 4.5 million players nationwide, helping build a database of sports fans that the gambling operator could mine as the sportsbook rolls out in more states.

Louis Maione, president and cofounder, SportsGrid Inc.



SportsGrid's Louis Maione. SportsGrid

Louis Maione is the face of SportsGrid, one of the hottest digital sports-media properties still on the market following a spate of media and gambling tie-ups in the sector.

Penn National Gaming took a \$163 million stake in Barstool Sports, sports network VSIN sold to DraftKings for a reported \$100 million, The Action Network sold to Bettor Collective for \$240 million — all in the last 18 months or so.

SportsGrid, which has an exclusive content deal with gambling operator FanDuel, remains independent.

Maione, president of SportsGrid, cofounded the sports network with CEO Jeremy Stein. Their vision was to create a free 24-hour audio and video network focused on sports betting and entertainment content. That includes 18 hours of live programming per day on the network, which is distributed on video platforms including Pluto TV, Xumo, and The Roku Channel, and through satellite-radio provider SiriusXM.

Under Maione's leadership, SportsGrid most recently launched a video-content management system to syndicate sports betting and fantasy content.

Maione cofounded fantasy sports site RotoExperts.com earlier in his career.

Mike Morrison, VP, sports betting & fantasy, ESPN



ESPN VP Mike Morrison. Joe Faraoni/ESPN Images

ESPN is one of the biggest sports-media properties in the US, so it's not surprise that it's been a sought after partner for gambling operators.

Mike Morrison, VP of sports betting and fantasy at ESPN, manages those relationships.

Last year, Morrison oversaw the opening of a new studio at Caesars Entertainment's The Linq Hotel and Experience on the Las Vegas Strip, where sports-betting show "Daily Wager" is now filmed.

He also signed separate deals with Caesars and DraftKings that include links out to both companies' sportsbooks in exchange for affiliate fees. Those links appear on ESPN's desktop and mobile website and in its fantasy sports apps. And Caesars provides ESPN with odds data and DraftKings with daily-fantasy data as part of the pacts.

Morrison has led the business side of ESPN's sports-betting efforts since it first ventured in the sector.

He was named VP of business development in 2018, when he was responsible for new business ventures including sports betting and esports. He also spent about a decade driving ESPN's businesses in the Asia Pacific region.

Morrison joined ESPN in 2007.

Valerie Mosley, founder and CEO, Upward Wealth and Valmo Ventures



Valerie Mosley. Astrid Stawiarz/Getty Images for DuJour

Valerie Mosley is relative newcomer to the sports-gambling sector compared with some other power players on this list. The business leader and investment manager joined the board of DraftKings in September, along with former NBA executive Jocelyn Moore.

But Mosley brings a unique perspective that could push change at the highest levels of the industry.

Her focus at Valmo Ventures, the investment firm she founded and runs, is on companies that are good for society as well as shareholder's pocketbooks. Upward Wealth, another business she started and leads as chief, also focuses on financial health.

That's valuable in an industry that, while still nascent in the US, is facing a reckoning in Europe, where UK regulators are trying to crack down on problem gambling that was exacerbated during the pandemic.

Mosley, who spent much of her career at money-management firm Wellington Management Company, also serves on DraftKings audit committee.

Marc Frank Pedersen, CEO, Better Collective USA



Bettor Collective USA CEO Marc Pederson. Better Collective USA

Bettor Collective USA CEO Marc Pederson oversaw the affiliate giant's biggest acquisition to date: its \$240 million purchase of the sports-media site The Action Network.

The Denmark-based company owns a slew of affiliate sites around the world that make money mainly by linking out to sportsbook, fantasy, and other gaming sites.

Bettor Collective pushed into the US in 2018 with a site called us-bookies.com, and expanded its portfolio of US-focused betting and fantasy sites to include sites RotoGrinders.com, Vegas Insider, and ScoresAndOdds.

Its latest deal for The Action Network, which also generates revenue from subscription fees, expands Bettor Collective's footprint further in the US.

The deal also marked a handsome exit for the sports-media startup that was created by The Chernin Group in 2017 and led by CEO Patrick Keane.

Pederson has worked at Better Collective since 2007. He took the reins of the company's US operations in 2019.

Arne Rees, North America CEO, Sportradar



Arne Rees. Sportradar

Arne Rees is leading the US expansion of Sportradar, a leading international provider of sports data and tech.

Rees was promoted to the new role North American CEO in 2020, after serving as the company's US chairman.

He's since been a key driver behind the company's acquisitions of Synergy Sports, which has a big library of college sports content and data, and Fresh Eight, an ad platform that lets gambling operators send personalized bets.

Sportradar manages the rights to sports data and content, and serves them up along with other tools to sportsbooks, media companies, and more. It's one of the distributors of NBA betting data, for example.

The acquisitions aim to expand Sportradar's universe of data and analytics, which Rees hopes will attract new partners, he told Sportico. The Fresh Eight deal also helps bolster Sportradar's advertising business.

Most recently, Rees championed a new product called emBET, which integrates live-betting content like odds and analysis into video streams, so viewers wouldn't need to look for those stats on their smartphones.

Rees worked at ESPN and UEFA, among other roles, before joining Sportradar.

Carolyn Renzin, chief risk and compliance officer, FanDuel



FanDuel's Carolyn Renzin. FanDuel

Carolyn Renzin is daily-fantasy-site FanDuel's guide through the complicated legal framework that regulates sports betting and fantasy sports in the US.

As FanDuel's chief risk and compliance officer, she built a team of lawyers and compliance professionals to navigate FanDuel's launches in new betting markets, among other efforts.

She also drove its latest responsible gambling initiatives, including its public-service campaign with the American Gaming Association and its pact with gambling-blocking software company Gamban to offer the service free to FanDuel customers who want to avoid real-money games.

Renzin, who joined FanDuel in 2019 as a VP, is one of the more senior leaders at the company, which recently lost its CEO. Matt King stepped down in May and FanDuel has not yet announced his replacement.

Parent company Flutter, meanwhile, has said it's considering taking part of FanDuel public in the US. That's another milestone that Renzin would no doubt be involved with if, it happens, given her role.

Renzin worked at JPMorgan Chase for six years before FanDuel.

Jason Robins, CEO, DraftKings



DraftKings CEO Jason Robins. DraftKings

DraftKings CEO and cofounder Jason Robins led the daily-fantasy company through one of the most successful sports SPAC debuts to date.

The company went public last April through a merger with supplier SBTech and a blank-check company. The market's enthusiasm for the pure-play betting stock has driven shares up more than 200% since its April 2020 debut, to around \$51 at the time of this writing.

Robins, who Forbes estimated became a billionaire amid the stock soar, also managed the combined company to reported revenue of \$614.5 million in 2020, up from an estimated \$323 million in 2019. But the losses ballooned to \$844 million in 2020 as DraftKings spent more to launch in new states.

As CEO and chairman, Robins oversees DraftKings' relationships with sports teams and leagues including the NFL, which chose DraftKings as one of its three official sportsbook partners this year.

The company also deepened its relationships with media companies in the past year, in an effort to lower the cost of acquiring new customers. That effort has been led by chief business officer Ezra Kucharz, who oversaw the acquisition of Brian Musberger's VSIN, the investment in John Skipper and Dan Le Batard's Meadowlark Media, and hiring a chief media officer.

Robins, meanwhile, has also said he's working to make DraftKings more inclusive and diversify its 2,600-person workforce. The company committed in its 2020 sustainability report promised to spend \$1 million a year advancing its inclusion, equity, and belonging goals.

DraftKings' 15-person board, which Robins chairs, has diversified in the last year to include three women and more Black members. It also added special advisors including Michael Jordan to counsel on areas such as strategy, inclusion, and marketing.

Sara Slane, Founder, Slane Advisory



Sara Slane. Sara Slane

Sara Slane advises sports leagues, teams, gaming operators, and media companies in the sports-betting and casino industries.

She knows the ins and outs of the industry after spending six years in public affairs at the American Gaming Association before starting her consultancy in 2019. She was also a key figure in the push to legalize sports betting in the US.

In the last year, Slane has advised companies including Bally's Corporation and Sinclair Broadcasting, which struck an \$85 billion deal that gives Bally's 10-year naming rights to Sinclair's regional-sports networks.

She orchestrated deals between the NHL, PGA Tour, and NASCAR and their respective gaming partners. And she helped newer leagues, including the Drone Racing and Premier Lacrosse leagues, jump into sports betting.

She currently advises multiple startups as well, including geolocation company GeoComply, micro-bet firm SimpleBet, and game developer Boom! Sports.

Slane was an executive at MGM Resorts International earlier in her career.

Omer Sattar, Cofounder and EVP, Sightline Payments



Sightline Payments cofounder Omer Sattar. Sightline Payments

Sightline Payments cofounder Omer Sattar is working to make the US sports betting and casino businesses more cashless.

The Las Vegas-based company's Play+ program, for example, supports online sportsbooks from BetMGM to William Hill so that users can load money into their sports betting accounts through a prepaid card.

Cashless payments have been tricky in the sports-betting sector because each state has its own guidelines.

In Illinois, gamblers have to first register for an account in person at a retail sportsbook location before they can place bets online. Gamblers in Michigan, meanwhile, can only bet on sports online while physically inside a casino.

But Sattar thinks there could be a cashless revolution in the casino industry coming out of the pandemic.

"Places were getting shut down in March (of 2020), and we started getting calls from casino operators around the country in May," Sattar told the Las Vegas Sun in March. "They were saying they needed to open and that many of their consumers were no

longer comfortable using cash. Contactless payments have skyrocketed all around the world because consumers are wanting to touch less paper."

Indeed, the governor of Illinois briefly waived in-person registration during the pandemic, but that was also because people were unable to visit physical locations while in lockdown.

Keith Wachtel, Chief Business Officer and Senior EVP, Global Partnerships, NHL



NHL Chief Business Officer Keith Wachtel. Michael Benabib/National Hockey League

NHL chief business officer Keith Wachtel is responsible for the NHL's deals with gambling operators like PointsBet and DraftKings, as well as other gaming companies like Sportradar.

Like other league executives, Wachtel is looking for ways to monetize sports gambling for the league and its teams.

The NHL's most recent deal with PointsBet, for example, gives the league an equity stake in the company, while PointsBet becomes one of the NHL's official league partners. It's among the deeper relationships that have been forged between sports leagues and gambling companies since the federal ban on sports wagering was struck down in 2018.

Wachtel joined the NHL in 2007, from the NFL, where he served in a similar role.