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Spread betting – how, why and when?

Spread betting is quite simply the most exciting way to bet and provides people the incentive to back their own instincts and judgements. In its simplest form, it is a game of higher and lower – much like Bruce Forsyth's Play Your Cards Right. Punters look at a prediction and then must decide whether they should bet higher or lower. The more you are right, the more you win, but conversely, the more you are wrong, the more you lose.

Firstly, we will look at the basics of 'how to spread bet'...

The first thing a spread betting punter must consider before betting on any event is where the 'spread' is pitched. The 'spread' is the range that covers the point at which a punter can bet lower (sell) to that at which he can bet higher (buy). I'll give you a simple example of how spread betting works...

A man can see a field in the distance and asks the farmer how many sheep are in the field. The farmer isn't sure, but guesses somewhere between 52-55 sheep. This is the spread and the man must decide whether he thinks the farmer has pitched his prediction too low or too high. He decides that there must be more than 55 so buys (bets higher) at that figure. When they get to the field they realise that there are actually 72, which means the man has made a profit of 17 times his imaginary stake ($72-55=17$).

This sounds very simple and it really is. Learning how to spread bet is purely working out whether you want to go higher or lower on the predicted figure.

Football Spread Betting

Football is the most popular sport in the world and probably the most popular sport to bet on as well. From grandparents playing the pools, to young students putting on their Saturday acca, punting on the nation's favourite sport has gone on for donkey's years. However, how many have ever placed a spread bet on a football match?

We will look at some of the most popular spread bets placed on football...

Corners

When you hear a joyful shriek from the back of the pub because the referee has awarded another corner, or a guy in front of you punches the table in disgust, it is more than likely that both men have had a spread bet on corners. There are usually 10-12 per game, but there have been many situations when that number has varied dramatically.

Player Goal Minutes

Player goal minutes is one of the most popular football bets **Sporting Index** offer. Cristiano Ronaldo was the absolute scourge of the traders last season after he found the net 31 times in the Premier League. The bet works by adding up the total minutes that your selection scores, so if he scored in the 49th, 70th and 88th minutes (like Ronaldo did against Newcastle last season), his total would make-up 207. Not bad if you've bought at around 32 minutes!

Shirt Numbers

Shirt numbers is another of the most popular bets and is also used in American Football markets. The final total is determined by the shirt number on the back of each goalscorer. A right-back wearing 2, netting the only goal of the game would lead to a measly make-up of 2. However, in this day and age when some players wear elaborately high squad numbers, a late goal can make a huge difference to the final total. Take for example the two goals scored by Deivid de Souza for Fenerbahce in the Champions League last season. Had he been wearing number 7 it would not have made that much difference to those who'd bought the early figure. However, he was wearing 99, buffering up the total by an incredible 198 points.

Bookings

Bookings is another fairly volatile market, as one tackle can change the complexion of the game entirely. Great research has to go into the nature of the referee, as 10 points are awarded for each yellow card and 25 per red. Games have quickly boiled over, notably Arsenal against Chelsea at the Millennium Stadium a couple of years ago, which saw three sending offs in the 90th minute.

Sporting Index took one hell of a beating...

One of the costliest bookings returns was at the 2006 World Cup when Holland and Portugal faced each other in the last 16. Russian referee Valentin Ivanov completely lost control of the game and started handing out cards like it was Valentines, not Valentin's Day. In the end, eight yellow cards and four red cards were issued, leading to a huge make-up of 180 and one of **Sporting Index's** worst ever bookings payouts.

Cricket Spread Betting

Cricket is probably the most suitable sport for spread betting due to it being so reliant on numbers. To many, test match cricket can be tedious and isn't exactly helped by a fixed-odds bet on the outright result, or a country's top batsman. However, if you're involved with a spread bet, then you are likely to be on the edge of your seat for the entire five days.

Here are just some of the attractive bets **Sporting Index** offer...

Batsman runs

Every time a batsman walks to the crease, the **Sporting Index** traders will offer a prediction on the total number of runs he will score in his innings. Punters have to ask themselves the question, will he go for a duck, or will he get a double century? True, it will usually be neither of these, but you only have to look at England's recent tour of India to see how batsman's performances can vary. Captain Kevin Pietersen had his wicket taken for 1 to the delight of sellers, whilst supposed 'weak link' Paul Collingwood went on to make 199 runs.

Team runs

Similarly to individual batsman runs, as soon as a team goes out to bat, they are given a spread of innings runs. This will usually change markedly during the innings as boundaries are hit and wickets fall. Looking back to the Lord's test between England and South Africa, England lost three early wickets for 117, they were available to sell at around 260. However, with Pietersen and Bell going on to make a stand of 286, buyers would have seen a huge profit by the time the innings closed at 593 for 8.

Lock-in a profit or take a reduced loss

The beauty of cricket and spread betting means that punters don't have to sit through hours of agony. Say that you've bought Andrew Strauss's first innings runs at 44 and he starts off with a few quick boundaries and races to 22 not out. The spread will now have moved to around 62-66 so you have the option to close out at 62, locking in an 18-point profit. As soon as you have closed the bet, whatever goes on to happen will make no difference to your return. Similarly, the opposite can apply with team runs and if a few quick wickets fall, then you can choose to close out and limit potential losses. The key skill in spread betting is recognising exactly when to close out.

Sporting Index took one hell of a beating

There are occasions where the trader does get it wrong.

In the 2007 ICC World Cup, many people had Ireland down for an early exit and the cricket traders at Sporting Index were no different. On the total runs market, they were predicted to knock 620 – 640 runs before being sent home by the more experienced Pakistan and West Indies. However having scrambled a draw with Zimbabwe in their opening game, they caused the shock of the tournament by beating Pakistan by 3 wickets. This meant that the Irish were on their way through to the Super 8 and another six games which meant buyers of the total runs market were laughing all the way to the bank as they smashed a total of 1452 runs before being sent home.

Racing Spread Betting

Betting on horse racing is one of the most popular pastimes in the UK and although it isn't the most suited sport to spread betting, there are plenty of opportunities to make money from markets you might never think about.

Imagine only cheering home big-priced horse, or being relieved because there's been a photo-finish. That is what you can expect from spread betting on horses. Here are the key markets...

Winning Distances

Whether it's on the jumps or the flat, we've all experienced the thrill of our horse bounding clear at the furlong pole to win by 6 lengths. OK, well it may not happen that often to your horse, but as long as it happens to one horse, that's all that matters to buyers of winning distances at a meeting. The market is calculated by the combination of winning distances in all races at any given meeting. Buyers often look to the heavens because heavy ground can sometimes turn races into processions. On a seven-race jumps card, all the winning distances added up together normally falls somewhere between 30 and 50 lengths. However, there have been occasions when the result has been in the low teens and others when it has made up more than 150!

SP's

How many times have you been to a racecourse and a number of favourites have been chinned by big-priced horses with absolutely no form in the book? You only have to go back to Look Here's shock win in the Oaks at 33/1 to see that big-priced horses do have their day. **Sporting Index's** SP's market predicts the combined SP's of all winners at a meeting. An evening meeting at Doncaster could have a spread of around 37-40, but if a 40/1 shot comes up in the first race, then buyers are already staring at a big profit, regardless of whether they close out or not.

Index

The most common index used in horse racing spreads is the system of giving 50 points to the race winner, 25 points to the second and 10 to the third. This, in a way, gave birth to laying horses on the exchanges, as those who don't fancy a short-priced favourite to win can sell them on the index. Alternatively, those who fancy an outsider to do better than its predicted spread, can buy them at low risk, hoping they will sneak into a place.

Sporting Index took one hell of a beating

There have been numerous tales of trading floor woes from the smallest National Hunt meetings, but one of the most high profile disasters was at the Breeders Cup at Churchill Downs in 2006. On a seven-race card with the best animals from around the globe, the **Sporting Index** traders were expecting extremely tight finishes and punters could buy winning distances at 10.5. When Street Sense won the Breeders' Cup Juvenile by a record 10 lengths in the first race, buyers were already hugely in the ascendancy and with some other clear winners; they took Sporting Index to the cleaners.

Where next.....

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