

Glitches cause issues for some betting outlets during Super Bowl

By Bailey Schulz Las Vegas Review-Journal

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Super Bowl LV's betting volumes seemed to be too much for some sportsbooks to handle.

BetMGM, FanDuel, DraftKings, BetRivers and Barstool Sportsbook all reported technical difficulties on Sunday, one of the biggest sports betting days of the year. Experts say the problems are a sign of growing pains in a burgeoning industry.

“Outages are part of life for digital companies. It's the virtual equivalent of a pipe bursting or a fire alarm going off at the casino,” said Chris Grove, a partner at Eilers and Krejcik Gaming.

“It's important to remember how rapidly the U.S. sports betting market is coming together. It truly is a plane being assembled in mid-flight. Growing pains — as unfortunate as they may be — are inevitable,” Grove said.

Sunday's 'surge in traffic'

In the hour leading up to Super Bowl LV's kickoff, the backend provider for a number of sportsbook companies — including DraftKings, BetRivers and

Barstool Sportsbook — faced intermittent issues that interfered with bet placements.

A spokesperson for the European-based company Kambi said the issue was not caused by the overall load on its system, but rather a high volume of betting on a specific Super Bowl player-related offer. The offer had an increased range of outcomes that required a “higher-than-normal technical capacity,” and the large volume of bets led to a backlog in the validation process.

“This specific problem was quickly identified and rectified ahead of kick-off, at which point Kambi processed the highest ever bet volumes in its history,” the spokesperson said. “Beyond this specific issue, all systems responded within acceptable performance limits.”

DraftKings, one of the partners affected by Kambi’s technical difficulties, confirmed via a statement that some customers were unable to access its mobile and online sportsbooks on Sunday. The company’s customer support Twitter account said there had been issues with bet placements and viewing bet history in multiple states.

“It appears this outage was caused by a surge in traffic that caused problems for our backend provider,” the statement said. “Our DFS (daily fantasy sports) and pools products, supported by in-house technology, are functioning without issue. This incident is why we believe owning our own technology is important.”

Troubles extended beyond Kambi-backed companies as well.

Flutter Entertainment's FanDuel tweeted Sunday that customers in Michigan and Illinois were having trouble logging in and placing wagers. Spokespeople for the company did not respond to a request for details on the technical issues or why its systems were not working properly.

Las Vegas-based BetMGM also had difficulties. The sports betting platform, a joint venture from MGM Resorts International and Entain plc, had issues with both the app and retail sportsbooks in Nevada.

Company spokespeople declined to comment on the cause of the outage.

A spokesperson for Penn National Gaming, which owns a 36 percent stake in Barstool Sportsbook, deferred to Kambi when asked for comment. BetRivers declined to comment for this story.

Growing pains

Sara Slane, founder of Slane Advisory, said one issue is likely at fault for Sunday's outages: a high volume of bettors.

There are seven new betting markets this year compared with last year, allowing 36 million more American adults the opportunity to bet legally in their home state. With access more widespread, the American Gaming Associations predicted that this year's Super Bowl would generate the [largest single-event legal handle](#) in American sports betting history. A report from Eilers and Krejcik Gaming estimated that Americans would wager \$615 million with legal retail and online sportsbooks for the game.

But rapid growth often comes growing pains, Slane said, some of which were made evident on Sunday.

“The operators are already having to navigate a pretty complex system with different state regulations, servers having to be located in different areas in the U.S.,” she said. “There’s a myriad of complexities they’re having to navigate in a nascent business.”

It’s unclear exactly how Sunday’s technical issues impacted the sportsbook operators, but Brendan Bussmann, director of government affairs for Global Market Advisors, believes business likely took a hit.

All five sportsbook operators declined to comment on the number of bettors or wagers during Super Bowl LV.

“It was a fumble by the industry that left some money on the table,” Bussmann said. “It could potentially sway some people on which platform they play on.”

But Slane said it’s possible the record-high betting volumes made up for any losses from the technical glitches. That seems to hold true for Kambi; its statement said its problems were rectified ahead of kickoff, and the company processed the highest-ever bet volumes in its history.

Slane added that she doesn’t believe Sunday’s technical issues will hurt the companies in the long run.

“A lot of operators view (Super Bowl Sunday) as a marketing tool to hopefully gain new customers year-round or on other events,” she said. “While there were difficulties ... these guys are real savvy and customer-focused, and they’ll hopefully be able to go back there and smooth over any problems.”

[BetMGM tweeted an apology](#) Sunday night to customers impacted by the outage, and said all winning bets placed within the app had been settled.

DraftKings shares closed down 3 percent Monday to \$61.97 on the Nasdaq. MGM shares closed up 4 percent to \$35.60 on the New York Stock Exchange. Entain shares closed up 1 percent Monday on the London Stock Exchange. Flutter Entertainment shares closed up 1.1 percent on the London Stock Exchange. Kambi Group plc shares closed up 0.6 percent to 498.40 Swedish kronas on the Nasdaq Stockholm. Penn National shares closed down 6 percent to \$121.23 on the Nasdaq. Rush Street Interactive, BetRiver's parent company, had shares close up 2.7 percent to \$21.88 on the New York Stock Exchange.

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