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2nd Edition

Alex Gowar

Head of Brand Marketing at Betfair

Jack Houghton

*Former Head of Horseracing
Communications at Betfair*

A Reference for the Rest of Us!®



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About the Authors

Alex Gowar is the Head of Brand Marketing at Betfair. A punter for 15 years, he joined Betfair in 2002 when it employed about 100 people and has watched in amazement as it has grown into a global business employing well over a thousand people. During that time he has written and produced more ads, emails, websites, and TV commercials than he dares remember.

Jack Houghton was the Head of Horseracing Communications at Betfair. He has been a life-long punter and jumped at the chance to work at Betfair when offered a job there in 2004. In 2007, he left the business to follow his dream of training racehorses full-time. He also works as a freelance journalist, writing about horseracing and betting. He won the Martin Wills Award for racing journalism in 2002.

Dedication

To the honest punter.

Authors' Acknowledgements

I'm so grateful for all the people who've encouraged and inspired me at Betfair. There are too many to name but hopefully they know who they are. It's a rare thing for your work to also be your hobby, and I feel extremely fortunate to have met so many friends through one company.

I'd like to thank my parents, my brothers, and the WAGs for all the encouragement they've given me, for letting me make my own mistakes and never telling me they told me so, and for being my best and wisest friends. But most importantly, for laughing with me, not at me.

AG

I'd like to thank my dad. Without him I wouldn't have gone racing for the first time and been introduced to the wonderfully varied and exciting world that is horseracing and betting. I should probably thank my mum as well. She fed me when I was growing up (and still does now occasionally) and will be annoyed if dad gets a mention and she doesn't.

JH

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was founded on an idea that punters deserve a fairer deal, and that attitude still pervades despite the company's success. In our view though, Betfair has been a success because of the people, not just the product, and we'd like to thank those who make it fun every day. In particular, thanks to Bert – for being a punter, for having an idea, and for not letting it change him.

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Introduction

No one knows when the first bet was placed, except that it was a long time ago. Archaeologists and anthropologists have plenty to occupy their time and we're guessing that this matter just hasn't seemed important up to now. But when was the momentous point in human history where one cave dweller turned to another and uttered 'I bet you that . . .?'

Whenever history's first bet was made, it started off a chain of events that made betting and gambling a central part of many cultures and, by the start of the 21st century, a booming industry worth many billions of pounds.

Within the betting industry are all types of characters – from small independent operators to state-run betting outlets all the way to massive corporations quoted on stock exchanges. All of these operators service the betting and gambling needs of an insatiable public.

What's interesting in this history is that betting soon turned from something that occurred between two individuals to something that occurred between an individual and a betting organisation. And for many years that was the accepted norm.

Then, in June 2000, Betfair was born, and the story turned full circle. Although still betting through an

organisation, Betfair odds are set by other individuals. Pure, unadulterated, person-to-person betting.

About This Book

This book explains what Betfair is and how you can go about betting, and winning, on it.

We cover everything from the basics – how you open an account and place your first bet – to more advanced betting techniques and strategies that can help you in your quest for profit.

We're clearly dyed-in-the-wool Betfair fans but we've tried to be objective in writing this book. Lots of winning strategies involve using other forms of betting and we include these too.

Conventions Used in This Book

For Dummies books are written to entertain and inform you. We use some conventions to help you navigate through the book.

Sidebar (text enclosed in a shaded grey box) are pieces of information that are interesting but not central to the story. You can skip them altogether, save them for later,

or read them with the general text. Web and e-mail addresses are in monofont.

Foolish Assumptions

We had to make some assumptions about the kind of person who'd want to read this book. As a starting point, we pinned up the names of five people who we knew and tried to write a book that would be useful to them. We hope you feel that you're coming at this book from a similar background to at least one of them:

✓ Jack's dad loves gambling. In an effort to support the chosen career of his son, he uses Betfair. Unfortunately he doesn't use computers and so instructs my mum about what bets he wants. She's getting quite good at placing the bets now, but still occasionally calls up on a Saturday morning for advice. Don't get me wrong, I love receiving calls from my mum, but I'm not a morning person and I hope this book will afford me a couple of extra hours' sleep.

✓ A friend of ours lives abroad and bets a lot on horse racing with the state-run pool betting. He's actually pretty good at picking winners, but, unfortunately, the profit margins built in to the pool he bets with means he'll never make a profit with them in the long-run. He could be a winner if he started using Betfair and we hope this book persuades him to make the switch.

✓ Another friend is passionate about sport and uses online fixed-odds bookmakers to place the odd bet. He's had a look at Betfair a few times but finds it a bit overwhelming and involved when all he wants to do is place the odd bet. But we know he'll love it when he gets into it, and so we hope the book gives him the impetus to give Betfair a go.

✓ An ex-colleague has used Betfair and other bookmakers for a while, playing around with different strategies. She's at the point where she wants to be more serious about it and so we hope this book helps her get her head around some of the more advanced approaches that she could be using.

✓ A distant relative I (Jack) keep bumping into always asks me what I do and looks slightly perplexed when I explain. Lots of people we meet don't want to bet, but are interested in Betfair as a company. This book gives those people a good overview of what Betfair is all about.

How This Book Is Organised

To make getting around the book, and winning on Betfair, easier we've divided the book into four parts.

Part I: Starting Out

This is all about getting your head around what Betfair is and how the concept works. We cover how to open an account and manage it, and how to decide what kind of things you want to bet on.

Part II: Let's Get Betting

This is where things start for real. In this section you place your first bet, get your head around the different types of bet you can choose, and get a grip on the mathematics behind betting. You also try out *in-play betting* (betting on something after the event has started) – one of the things that makes Betfair completely different from other betting options out there.