

# Sports handicapping skills can turn into good money

By Ron Sylvester, Las Vegas Sun

Professional bettors spent the week scouring electronic boards at sports books, looking for the best line and studying hundreds of proposition wagers for ways the Super Bowl could play out Sunday.

For them, betting football is a full-time job.

But most of the estimated 285,000 people who will swarm to Las Vegas to make Super Bowl Sunday the biggest day of the year at the sports books don't depend on football wagers for their livelihood. It's just fun – a way to make watching even a blowout a little more interesting.

People with an ability to pick winners can make a name for themselves, earn thousands of dollars and generate a following of other bettors.

Las Vegas has a history of people who have parlayed sports gambling into fame and fortune. The most notable may be Jimmy "The Greek" Snyder, who made sports betting understandable to the average fan, parlayed his knowledge into a gig on CBS and whose life story is the subject of a "30 for 30" documentary.

Among those in Las Vegas now making a name for themselves in sports betting are a golf guide, a cocktail waitress and a car salesman.

## **The golf guide**

"It's a hobby I enjoy and that I take very seriously, but I'm different from the guys who are real pros. I have a day job," said Brady Kannon, who runs BK's Golf Services, a concierge of the Las Vegas links. "I bet very casually, but I try to be

good at it and put my skill on the line.”

Kannon and three of his friends won the Supercontest two years ago at the LVH. Playing under the team name Sans Souci, French for “without worry,” they took home \$320,200.

This year, Kannon reached the semifinals in the Eye on Gaming invitational football contest. This week, Gaming Today included Kannon among its experts for its Super Bowl picks. As @lasvegasgolfer on Twitter, he has 2,000 people following his musings on golf and betting football.

“When I won the LVH contest, I gained about 1,000 Twitter followers,” Kannon said. “Most golfers are also gamblers, so I try to marry the two.”

Kannon learned about serious sports betting while working as a radio sportscaster after moving to Las Vegas 19 years ago. He picked up betting tips from sports gaming analysts and professional handicappers, such as Dave Cokin, Jim Feist, Marc Lawrence and Bob Stoll.

“That’s how I learned the whole skill of handicapping,” Kannon said. “Following their techniques and learning from their rules of thumb gave me a really good perspective on how they think.”

### **The cocktail waitress**

Kelly Stewart can’t pull into the Bellagio without a valet or a host asking her which teams she likes. She serves cocktails at the Hyde nightclub. But placing bets averaging \$1,000 a pop on college football, basketball and NFL games, she’s earned a tidy bankroll and become an Internet sensation among bettors.

“I’m definitely not an expert. There are guys who have been doing this for 30 years,” Stewart said. “I had a successful first couple of weeks and hit an 85-to-1 parlay. All of a sudden, people were calling from ESPN Radio and Don Best.”

Stewart has more than 9,000 followers on Twitter (@kellyinvegas). A former bikini contest winner, Stewart also appears in YouTube videos for DonBest.com in which she cracks wise and offers predictions, usually dressed in a revealing, ripped football jersey and boy shorts. Videos by veteran male handicappers at Don Best get a few dozen views. Stewart's draw thousands.

The videos aren't scripted for her. Stewart develops her own picks and point spreads.

Her sex appeal and handicapping ability helped her build the website HottieHandicappers.com. There, she and her online partner, a handicapper named Marlana, make picks on a weekly three-game parlay, the "Hottie 3 Some."

"Nobody ever does parlays like this because they think they're such big risks," Stewart said. "To me, they're such low risks. It's \$100 to hit \$9,000. If you lose a hundred a week, you'll lose \$5,200 but if you hit one of the parlays, you're up."

She's hit at least a half dozen during the past year.

Stewart picks up cash on tips by people who visit her website and profit from the picks. She's had customers at Hyde who followed her tips. After one man hit a parlay, Stewart said, he showed up to one of her tables at Hyde and dropped several thousand dollars on Champagne.

She said she wants to keep sports betting fun, separate from her real job at Hyde.

"The second year of a club is always the best year, so I'm really looking forward to it," she said of Hyde. "This is my job. I'm passionate about the betting. But it's like my play money. I've won enough it's house money. When you're playing with house money, if you lose it, it was never really yours to begin with."

## **The car salesman**

Hobby handicappers aren't merely weekend warriors.

"I tell people I bet every day and they just kind of look at me, like 'What?' But I just enjoy it," said Larry Koziarski, better known to friends and acquaintances as "Larry K."

Larry K. works in sales for Findlay Auto Group in Las Vegas, but he's been betting sports since 1965. Originally from Michigan, Larry K. moved to Las Vegas permanently 10 years ago.

"I moved here so I could bet sports," he said. "First, it's legal here. And when you win, you always get paid in Las Vegas."

He shares his insights on the paid online message board at Anthony Curtis' Las Vegas Advisor, where he talks sports and money with pros who bet 30 times as much as he does.

"That's where you'll find most of the big boys in town, on that message board," he said. "Most of the professional bettors are participants on that. They impart a lot of knowledge. You take everything you read and kind of just move forward. It's a constant process, never ending. Every day, every bet is different. You see how much you won or lost, and then you start over."

## **Down to business**

Larry K. and Stewart both like betting online, where it's easier to shop for lines and point spreads from their phones. Kannon likes the feel of betting inside a casino at the sports book counters at the LVH, Station Casinos or the Wynn.

For beginners, or squares as they call them in the books, numbers should outweigh emotions. Put simply, don't always bet on a favorite team.

“One of the rules of thumb that anybody involved professionally or seriously (is) don’t get so tied up in betting on teams,” Kannon said. “What is more important is what numbers are you beating. The numbers are so key, especially in NFL football.”

Kannon said even a naive bettor could do well simply by not wagering on a team favored by more than one field goal or touchdown. Betting a favorite with a  $-2\frac{1}{2}$  spread is better than  $-3\frac{1}{2}$ , he said.

Then again, rules are made to be broken. That’s why it’s called gambling.

“One of the rules of sports betting people break all the time is bet the numbers, not your heart,” Stewart said. “That’s what I do when I bet on Kansas State. I bet on them all the time. People tell me I’m crazy. I tell them I’ll stop when K-State quits covering the spread.”

Then again, Stewart will take rival University of Kansas most any night in basketball. To Wildcats fans, only a real gambler would do that.

But Stewart isn’t alone when breaking the rules. Sometimes, betting is just a gut feeling.

In this weekend’s Super Bowl, the San Francisco 49ers are  $3\frac{1}{2}$ -to 4-point favorites over the Baltimore Ravens. The basic tenet would dictate taking the Ravens +4.

Most weeks, the golfing guide, the cocktail waitress and auto salesman would follow those rules.

This is the Super Bowl, after all.

All three said their money was on the 49ers.