

# WEEKLY ENGLISH PRACTICE

## Gambling addiction

### Why elite sportspeople are especially vulnerable



After a decade-long gambling addiction, Marc Williams, a once promising youngster at Wrexham FC, had lost control.

He had been **wading** through a **swamp** of debt for some time and now couldn't pay off the interest on his credit cards. Still, he attempted to place a £10,000 bet. The screen **greeted** him with the words "insufficient funds".

He **hurled** the iPad he was holding as hard as he could. Then he started throwing anything that wasn't tied down in his living room. He screamed and cried, cursing the world and his misfortune.

Then, he locked eyes with his 18-month-old daughter sitting on the floor.

"She was just staring at me," Williams reflects. "I'll always have that image in my mind, of what I must have looked like to her. I calmed myself down and picked her up. I held her close and said out loud that I was going to get help. For the first time in my life, I meant it. I promised that I wouldn't ruin her future any more."

That was 7th November 2018—a date Williams recalls as he tightly shuts his eyes. He hasn't placed a bet since.

Footballers in Britain are **bombarded** with the logos and slogans of betting companies. "They're everywhere," says James Grimes—founder of the Big Step, a campaign launched in 2019 to

eradicate gambling advertising from football at all levels.

"They're on the high street. They're on the telly. They're on the radio. The Football League is sponsored by Sky Bet. Major stadiums and teams are sponsored by them."

Eight Premier League teams display gambling firms on the front of their shirts, while two more wear betting-related adverts on their sleeves.

Brentford, who have South African gambling company Hollywoodbets as their most prominent sponsor, are **spearheaded** on the field by Ivan Toney. The England striker, who is serving an eight-month ban for **breaching** betting rules 232 times, has been diagnosed with a gambling addiction.

The contrast between his suspension and addiction, and his team's sponsor, has drawn attention. "It's rank hypocrisy," says Grimes. "These young men are forced to become walking **billboards** for online casinos and then lose their jobs if they use that product."

However, change will come in 2026 when gambling companies will no longer be allowed on the front of top-flight teams' shirts after a **ground-breaking** agreement between clubs.

Grimes called the move "incoherent", pointing out gambling companies will still be able to occupy the players' sleeves, pitch side hoardings, stadium floodlight pylons and the airwaves between the action.

But the shirt-front ban is an acknowledgment of the adverse effects of the sport's close relationship with a product that has the potential to cause harm.



Adapted from [this article](#)

by ECP coach Darren

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## Word list

- wade:** to walk with effort through water
- swamp:** an area of low-lying, uncultivated ground where water collects
- greet:** to occur as a response to an action
- hurl:** to throw with great force
- bombard:** to subject (someone) to a continuous flow of questions, criticisms or information
- breach:** to break the law, promise, agreement or relationship
- spearhead:** to lead an attack or movement
- billboard:** a very large board on which advertisements are shown, especially on the side of a road
- ground-breaking:** something that is very new and a big change from other things of its type

## Let's chat about that!

1. Have you noticed an increase in betting offices where you live?
2. What do people in your opinion tend to bet on where you are from?
3. Do you think gambling should be legal? Why/not?
4. Do you know any famous person/people from your country that have had a gambling problem?
5. Do you believe there is enough education around gambling to avoid major problems for future generations?
6. Although it's an illness, would you find it difficult to forgive a gambling addict for putting you in huge debt?

## Use of English: Than vs. That

**Than** is always used for **comparing** two things. You cannot substitute **that** for **than** in a comparative sentence.

Incorrect: *It is better **that** I thought.* This is a common mistake.

Correct: *It is better **than** I thought.*

**That** is a **demonstrative pronoun**. It replaces the subject or object in the sentence.

Example: *Rock climbing is hard. / Yes, **that** was hard. (That = rock climbing)*

**That** is also a **relative pronoun** used to connect and add more information.

Example: *She took the test **that** was hard. (She took the hard test)*

**That** is also a **conjunction** used to connect two clauses in a sentence.

Example: *It's good **that** we're leaving. (We're leaving + It's good)*

Finally, **that** can also be used as an adverb.

Example: *The test wasn't **that** bad. (The test wasn't so bad)*

### Complete these sentences:

My sister sings much better \_\_\_\_\_ I do.

She said \_\_\_\_\_ she wanted to sleep.

I can't believe you would rather stay at home \_\_\_\_\_ come to the party with me.

Big Ben is not \_\_\_\_\_ tall.

More examples here: <https://www.ingles.com/comparar/that/than>