



# Chelsea Supporters' Trust



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## *CST Letter on Chelsea Football Club Sponsorship*

Dear Todd,

We are writing to you today regarding the ongoing reports that Chelsea Football Club is in final negotiations with the online casino and betting company - *Stake*. The reports allege that the organisation is set to become the new primary shirt sponsor on an initial one-year deal.

The Chelsea Supporters' Trust (CST), on behalf of its members is writing to you today to express our views on these reports.

**The Chelsea Supporters' Trust does not believe that it is in the best interests of our members for Chelsea Football Club to associate with an online casino and betting company as the primary shirt sponsor.**

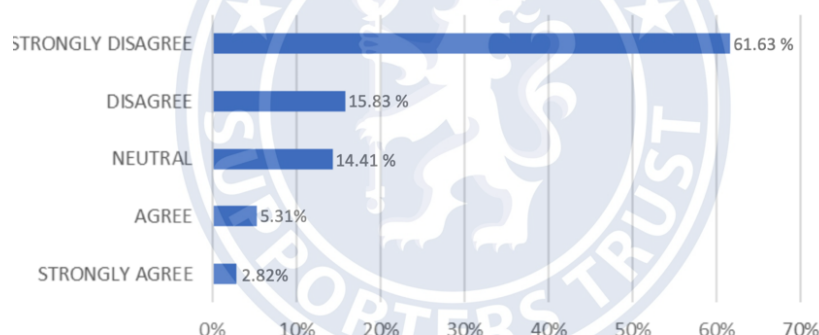
### Views of members

On Friday 16<sup>th</sup> June, the Chelsea Supporters' Trust issued an urgent question to its membership to ascertain views and opinions on this matter.

YouGov estimates that over 1 million people are addicted to gambling in the UK, with nearly 3 million people harmed by someone else's gambling.

Over 77% of our voting members strongly disagree or disagree with the use of an online casino and betting company as the primary shirt sponsor. Full poll results are below and we have also attached a full unedited document detailing every additional comment that we received on this issue.

Which of the following statements comes closer to your thinking about the use of an online casino and betting company as a primary shirt sponsor?



### **Impact on work of The Chelsea FC Foundation**

Like all supporters, the CST is proud that our club has one of the most successful foundations in the country. The excellent work that the Chelsea Foundation does is highly commendable. It is vital that we continue to use the power of football to excite and motivate learners of all ages.

In November 2022, The Chelsea Foundation pioneered an excellent programme that delivered a range of gambling harm awareness education workshops to schools in and around Hammersmith & Fulham. This work was rightly celebrated by the club and was shared across the website and social media.

In April 2023, the club launched its *Talk More Than Football* campaign. A campaign that encouraged football supporters to open up about their mental health. Former players helped spread this poignant message and encouraged supporters to #TalkMoreThanFootball. It is also important to note *Over the Line* - a project pioneered by the CST to help Chelsea fans come to terms with their own mental health issues and help them take the next step.

The Chelsea Supporters' Trust is therefore deeply concerned that only months after these programmes were launched, CFC is linked to these recent media reports.

An online casino and betting company as a primary shirt sponsor would make a total mockery of much of the previous work pioneered by The Chelsea Foundation. It would be short-sighted and would force many of our members to see any future CFC Foundation projects as tokenistic.

Todd, it is vital that you are fully aware that if these reports materialise, it will eradicate any goodwill built through previous campaigns completed by the CFC Foundation.

We are writing to you today to ensure that you are fully aware of supporter sentiment on this issue when you make the decision on sponsorship.

### **Isolation of large groups of supporters**

Prior to your acquisition of our club, we discussed with you how important it was for the new owner to build a club which is inclusive for everyone, regardless of ethnicity, gender, religion, sexuality, age, or background. We agreed that Chelsea FC must be an inclusive and welcoming club for everyone, and you hoped to create an open and caring community for the fans.

The Chelsea Supporters' Trust believes that this type of sponsor will alienate many supporters. It should be noted that Chelsea FC is a global leader that has a significant influence on people. This influence must never be misused to propagate a market to children that has such an adverse impact on people. Children are explicitly at risk and there are 105,000 British children already addicted to gambling or at risk of being so. Gambling sponsorship also strips away the freedom for young fans to wear the same shirt as their heroes and role models. This type of shirt sponsor makes it incredibly difficult for those who object on moral or religious grounds.

### **Premier League response following a Government review into gambling legislation**

In April 2023, The Premier League announced that clubs had collectively agreed to withdraw gambling sponsorship from the front of matchday shirts from the end of the 25/26 season.

the Premier League introduced this regulation as a measure to reduce gambling advertising following an extensive consultation as part of the Government's review of relevant legislation.

If these media reports come to fruition, the CST believes that this would send an incredibly damning message. The use of gambling sponsorships devalues the image of the club and suggests that the incumbent board has accepted mediocrity.

Our members expect the club to do much better than partner with an organisation that causes so much destruction and distress.

### **Conclusion**

Former Chelsea #22, Eidur Gudjohnsen, who has openly discussed his issues with gambling addiction, recently said:

*"What is it that highlights a club? It's the shirt sponsor. You have every football fan, every kid in the world, with their eyes on the shirts of our biggest clubs every single day. A shirt sponsor is a strong message. Advertising is so influential."*

86% of online gambling comes from just 5% of customers. It is an industry built on an addiction that destroys people, destroys relationships, and destroys lives. While the CST accepts that a number of supporters will partake in a responsible bet, over 77% of our members strongly disagree or disagree with the use of an online casino and betting company as primary shirt sponsor. A sponsorship of this kind will only increase the gulf between Chelsea Football Club and many of its supporters.

It is public knowledge that the sponsorship with *Three* was to expire this summer. The CST is disheartened and unsure as to why it has taken until June to reportedly establish this new sponsor? An online casino and betting company as the primary shirt sponsor is not in line with the commitment of growing and developing Chelsea FC as a "world-class" organisation. It is within the public domain that Stake's most notable product is 'online slots', and it should be noted that online slots have an addiction or 'at risk' rate of 45%. We understand CFC's desire to maximise revenue streams across the whole club. Whilst we accept that will happen, it must not take place at the expense of the club's values.

On June 8th, the ownership declared that it is "relentlessly focused on driving us forward." The Chelsea Supporters Trust has confidence that you will not divert from this commitment, especially at a time when the supporters are enormously deflated following a very disappointing season.

We would welcome further consultation on this subject and look forward to further dialogue.

Yours Sincerely,

*The Chelsea Supporters' Trust Board*

**N.B** Statistics and information provided within this letter have been provided by The Big Step. A leading charity that campaigns to end all gambling and advertising in football. <<https://the-bigstep.com>>

Total number of respondents to poll: 3,297