

The Sacramento Kings' gaming app: 'travelling' into the world of online sports betting in the US?

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The Sacramento Kings have recently launched a [new mobile gaming app](#) "Call the Shot", the first of its kind seen in the NBA. While the game itself isn't new (the first version was released in 2016) the new version introduces some features that are reminiscent of sports betting, despite such activity not yet being legal in California.

The Kings developed the game with technology company Xperial (who are also working with NFL team the [New York jets](#) on a similar in-game prediction app). "Call the Shot" allows fans to make real-time predictions from the app before and during games and play to win in-app credits that can be exchanged for in-app prizes, which include hotel stays, merchandise, game tickets, fan experiences and more. The game is only available via the [Sacramento Kings + Golden 1 Center](#) app, which is free to download, and can be played either at the King's Golden 1 Center arena or from home. Additional gaming options and extra credits are available to those who play in the arena. A key feature of the new version, and what brings the game into the sports betting sphere, is that fans can now place bets using hypothetical coins on different statistical outcomes during a game, for example who will be the Kings' top scorer during a quarter or during the game as a whole.

Similar free entry sports prediction games already exist in the UK and are very popular. One example is the Sky Sports "[Soccer Saturday Super 6](#)" game where players try and correctly predict the outcome of six football fixtures which are named the Super 6 fixtures for that week. The game is played either online or via a free app and if you guess all six scores correctly, unlike "Call the Shot", big cash prizes are available.

As mentioned previously, sports betting is not currently legal in California and it is unlikely to become legal in the near future. This is not for want of trying, there are a number of people and organisations in the state trying to drive the movement forward. Possibly the greatest blockers to the legalisation of sports betting are the powerful Native American tribes in California who would strongly oppose it. The tribes have a self-declared monopoly on most gaming activities in California which would certainly be jeopardised by the legalisation of sports betting.

Despite the presence of betting in the app, the Kings insist that the game is not (yet) gambling, but is a raffle. There is no purchase necessary, even the app itself is free, and no cash prizes are available. By way of comparison, under UK law a raffle is considered a form of lottery and is governed by the Gambling Act 2005. For something to be a lottery there must be the distribution of prizes by chance with a payment to enter ([section 14 Gambling Act 2005](#)). In the UK unless a lottery is licensed or it is an exempt lottery under schedule 11 of the Gambling Act 2005, then it will be illegal. So under UK law, the Kings would be right, their game isn't gambling as there is no payment to play.

The Kings want "Call the Shot" to both increase fan engagement in an age where mobile devices are increasingly integrated into our lives and, primarily, educate their fans about sports betting for the future. By giving them a taste of it now Kings fans will be [fully prepared for new levels of in-game engagement](#), and the King's will be well placed to fully utilise sports betting when (or if) California eventually does legalise sports betting.

The question is, how many other NBA teams not just in California b



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ut across the United States will follow suit, and when?

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