

Game, Set & Match Monthly

Gaming and Sports Law Newsletter (November 2025)

GAMING NEWS UPDATE

1. CENTRE DEFENDS ONLINE GAMING ACT 2025 IN SUPREME COURT

The Union government filed an affidavit before the Supreme Court defending the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025, against challenges by industry players like Head Digital Works (A23). It highlighted unregulated real-money gaming's links to terror financing, money laundering, drug/human trafficking, and suicides, with Indians losing ₹20,000 crore annually and suspicious transactions surging to over 200 probes in 2023-24 involving ₹5,700 crore remittances. Citing state data (32 suicides in Karnataka 2023-25, 20 in Telangana 2024, 30+ in Tamil Nadu), the Centre argued public safety trumps Article 19(1)(g) business rights, invoking Entries 31/97 of List I for parliamentary competence over digital spaces. The Act bans real-money games but spares e-sports/non-monetary ones, with the government ready to share classified evidence in sealed cover; High Court cases are consolidated before Justices Pardiwala and Viswanathan.

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2. KARNATAKA TO LEGALIZE ONLINE HORSE RACE BETTING

The Karnataka government plans to introduce a bill amending the Karnataka Race Courses Licensing Act, 1952, during the winter session starting December 8 in Belagavi, permitting licensed online wagering on horse racing events. This aligns with practices in Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Maharashtra, and West Bengal, recognizing horse race betting as a skill-based activity per Supreme Court precedents, while aiming to boost state revenue through regulated platforms and curb unauthorized channels. The move challenges the Union's Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025 (PROGA), which prohibits real-money gaming nationwide; Karnataka views betting/gambling as a State List subject under Entry 34, calling PROGA a "colourable exercise of power" and preparing a Supreme Court intervention. The bill, one of 31 slated for the session, confines online betting to authorized platforms to ensure transparency and integrity.

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SPORTS NEWS UPDATE

1. REAL MADRID AND THE SUPER LEAGUE TAKE AIM AT UEFA

The escalating conflict between Real Madrid and UEFA entered a decisive new phase as Florentino Pérez used the club's Extraordinary General Assembly to signal a shift toward a more assertive, independent strategy, one centred on reviving the Super League project even without Barcelona as an ally. A22 Sports Management, the company behind the Super League, has now filed a multibillion-euro lawsuit against UEFA, accusing it of abusing its dominant position as the monopoly operator of European club competitions. Real Madrid will file a separate but related suit, bringing the total claim to more than €4.5 billion. The legal action builds on the recent Court of Justice of the European Union ruling, which criticised UEFA's anti-competitive structure and opened the door for rival competition models. A22 argues that UEFA's conduct prevented fair market access for its "Unify League" project, a redesigned Super League format proposed in December 2024, despite seven months of

negotiations in which A22 claims it made substantial concessions, including improvements to competition format and a unified streaming model. With no agreement reached and talks deemed unproductive, A22 asserts that litigation is the only path to compensation for UEFA's "continued unlawful conduct."

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2. MASSA'S 2008 F1 CHAMPIONSHIP LAWSUIT CLEARED FOR TRIAL DESPITE PARTIAL DISMISSAL

Felipe Massa's £64 million legal battle against Formula 1, the FIA and former F1 chief Bernie Ecclestone will proceed to trial after a UK High Court ruling allowed key parts of his case to move forward. Massa argues that he, not Lewis Hamilton, is the rightful 2008 world champion, claiming the title was tainted by the deliberately staged crash involving Nelson Piquet Jr. at the Singapore Grand Prix, an incident that disadvantaged him and was allegedly known but concealed by F1 leadership at

the time. Justice Robert Jay found that while Massa is unlikely to prove the FIA owed him specific legal duties, he does have a viable case regarding an alleged “unlawful means conspiracy” and inducement claims, allowing the core of the suit to proceed. However, the judge dismissed Massa’s request for declarations effectively recognizing him as the rightful 2008 champion, stating the Court cannot rewrite championship outcomes nor interfere with the FIA’s governance. The defence argued the lawsuit was too late, that Massa’s own race errors cost him the title, and that the claim attempts to reopen a settled championship. Massa’s legal team countered that the defendants’ prior knowledge of the crash manipulation gives his claims substantial merit. The full case will now be tested at trial.

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3. MBAPPÉ–PSG RIFT EXPLODES INTO €700 MILLION LEGAL BATTLE OVER CONTRACT, CONDUCT, AND COMPENSATION

The tensions between Kylian Mbappé and Paris Saint-Germain have erupted into a massive legal confrontation, with both sides presenting staggering financial claims before a French industrial court. Mbappé, who left PSG for Real Madrid on a free transfer in 2024, now demands more than €260 million, arguing that his fixed-term contract should be reclassified as a permanent one, a move that would entitle him to compensation for unfair dismissal, unpaid wages, bonuses, severance, and damages for alleged moral harassment and breaches of good faith. PSG has countered with an even larger demand of roughly €440 million, claiming Mbappé’s refusal to extend his contract deprived the club of a lucrative transfer opportunity, especially the rejected €300 million offer from Al-Hilal in 2023. The club also alleges violations of good faith in negotiations, reputational harm, and financial loss tied to what it describes as Mbappé’s concealed decision not to extend between July 2022 and June 2023. The relationship deteriorated sharply after Mbappé declined the option year of his contract in 2023. PSG responded by isolating him from the main squad, though he ultimately played in most of the season’s matches. The club denies any mistreatment, attributing all sporting decisions to its coach and insisting Mbappé remained in a

professional environment consistent with French football regulations.

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4. NASCAR HEADS TO LANDMARK ANTITRUST TRIAL AS 23XI AND FRONT ROW CHALLENGE THE LEAGUE’S POWER STRUCTURE

The upcoming federal jury trial in Charlotte, North Carolina marks one of the most consequential legal showdowns in NASCAR’s history, with the potential to reshape the power dynamics between the league and its teams. The case pits 23XI Racing (co-owned by Michael Jordan, Denny Hamlin and Curtis Polk) and Front Row Motorsports against NASCAR, alleging long-standing anticompetitive practices that suppress competition and restrict teams’ commercial freedom. The litigation has already been unusually intense, with multiple emergency injunction motions, high-stakes appellate review, failed mediations and aggressive countersuits, including NASCAR’s allegation that the plaintiffs attempted to form an “illegal cartel.” Central to the dispute is NASCAR’s charter system, which guarantees race entry but imposes strict non-compete restrictions and broad releases of claims. Jordan’s 23XI and Front Row argue these charters give NASCAR excessive monopoly and monopsony control while constraining team revenues, innovation and bargaining power. They refused to sign new charters, contending the system undermines normal business autonomy. NASCAR, by contrast, insists its market position stems from legitimate success, and that charters have significantly increased in value.

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5. JUSTICE RAO PROPOSES BALANCED OVERHAUL OF ISL COMMERCIAL FRAMEWORK TO REVIVE FAILED TENDER PROCESS

Justice (Retd.) L. Nageswara Rao has submitted a detailed report to the Supreme Court recommending a recalibrated commercial and governance structure for the Indian Super League (ISL), after the All India Football Federation’s (AIFF) tender to monetise the league’s rights failed to attract even a single bid. The report attempts to bridge the gap between preserving the AIFF’s regulatory primacy and creating a commercially viable environment that would encourage credible bidders, a necessity given the fast-approaching

2025–26 season. The failed tender highlighted several major concerns: an onerous annual minimum guaranteed payment of ₹37.5 crore, limited decision-making powers for commercial partners, minimal representation on the AIFF governing council, and restrictions on managing or sub-licensing broadcast and related rights. Justice Rao noted that these issues collectively deterred potential bidders and urged a redesign of the financial structure, including reducing or restructuring the guaranteed payment to ensure commercial feasibility without undermining AIFF's financial interests. He also recommended a revamped governance model granting commercial partners equal representation and removing veto powers that could hinder timely commercial decisions. The report stresses that AIFF's constitutional authority over "Essential Aspects" must remain intact, but day-to-day commercial and operational management should fall squarely within the commercial partner's domain.

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6. WIDESPREAD BETTING SCANDAL ROCKS TURKISH FOOTBALL AS OVER 100 PLAYERS AND REFEREES FACE SANCTIONS

Turkey's Football Federation (TFF) has imposed bans on 102 players from its top two divisions for betting-related violations, with punishments

ranging from 45 days to 12 months. Among those sanctioned are Galatasaray players Eren Elmalı and Metehan Baltacı, who received 45-day and nine-month suspensions respectively. The penalties will become final after the seven-day appeal window closes. This wave of disciplinary action follows the TFF's unprecedented suspension of 1,024 professional players across all divisions earlier in the week as part of an expanding investigation into illegal betting. As a result, matches in Turkey's third and fourth tiers have been postponed for two weeks. Elmalı publicly denied wrongdoing, stating that the only connection to his name was a historic bet placed five years ago without his knowledge. Galatasaray has vowed to closely monitor the ongoing process. The scandal escalated after TFF president İbrahim Hacıosmanoğlu revealed on 27 October that hundreds of referees were linked to betting accounts, 371 out of 571 match officials, with 152 actively placing wagers. Some referees placed thousands of bets, including one who executed over 18,000 wagers. Since betting by football officials is strictly prohibited under TFF, FIFA and UEFA regulations, Turkish prosecutors have issued detention orders for 21 individuals, including 17 referees and two club presidents.

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