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## Casinos eager for games, sports bets

### Wagering could begin by fall, CEOs predict

By *GINGER GIBSON*  
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DOVER -- Barring any complications, sports betting should be live by the start of the NFL season and table games by year's end.

Once Gov. Jack Markell signs the bill into law today, officials anticipate it will take three months to get sports betting running and no more than six months to get table games in play.

Representatives from two of the state's three casinos say they are confident they can meet that timeline. But the NFL could try to block implementation of sports betting in court and Delaware's Supreme Court has not yet ruled on the legality of table games or various forms of sports betting, such as bets on a single game.

Ed Sutor, CEO of Dover Downs, said his company is working to get sports betting live before the first fall football game, even if that means operating out of the track's horse-racing simulcast area until an empty restaurant in the casino can be renovated into a sports-betting parlor, complete with big-screen TVs.

Bill Fasy, CEO of Delaware Park, said his facility won't have to embark on any new construction, just train people to take the bets.

Both executives said if everything goes as planned, they can have table games such as poker, blackjack, craps and roulette ready by the end of December.

"It's to our advantage to get it up before the Christmas holidays," Fasy said.

Sutor said live poker can start sooner than other games because there is less training involved for dealers.

Representatives from Harrington Raceway did not return phone calls.

The bill legalizing the new forms of gambling gives the Controller General's Office, Department of Finance and a representative of the racinos 75 days to agree on regulations for the table games and what portion of revenue from them will go to the state.

Sutor said he hopes the group is able to agree on a split similar to West Virginia, which also allows table games. Casinos there keep more of the revenue than they give to the state to offset their payroll and surveillance costs.

Part of the group's work will be to recommend whether the state or the individual casinos should determine or restrict the variety of table games to be offered or the size of bets that can be placed. Regulations also will outline how the state will track the money, when audits will be performed and how reporting will be conducted.

The group will report back to the General Assembly, which will vote on the new regulations, said House Majority Leader Pete Schwartzkopf, D-Rehoboth Beach.

Fasy said waiting for legislative approval could push back the start date, but he's hopeful that won't happen.

Sutor said once the issues are agreed on, his company will begin purchasing equipment and hiring staff.

Dealers, a traditionally well-paid job that requires running the table games, would be hired two to three months before the estimated start date, Sutor said.

The casinos plan to partner with Delaware Technical and Community College to bring in dealing instructors from another state, such as New Jersey, to teach the new hires how to run the table games, Sutor said.

Running a poker game is the simplest, Sutor said, because it only requires dealing cards. But running a game like craps is much more complicated because it requires the dealers to do permutations in their heads, he said.

Sports betting is less complicated to implement, because casinos can train existing staff to take bets as they do horse racing bets.

The legislation does not specify what form the sports betting will take, and state officials have said they are waiting on word from the Delaware Supreme Court to determine what types of betting would pass both state and federal muster.

Steve Budin, who ran an offshore sports betting Web site in Panama for several years and currently runs a Web site that offers advice to gamblers, said the state will be most successful if it allows straight bets -- betting against the spread or based on odds -- because otherwise it will only attract "dollar and a dream" bettors, people who think if they play \$20 on three teams, they have a good shot of winning \$20,000.

Most offshore betting Web sites, like the one Budin ran, allow for straight bets, that receive a smaller return but generally have a 50/50 shot of winning.

"You target people from humble and poor backgrounds," Budin said. "I don't think that's right."

As for opposition from the NFL and other sports leagues, Budin said he sees it as a front from an industry that depends on betting to keep viewers watching.

"The leagues know they need the gambling, yet they have to appear as if they're completely against it," Budin said.

For instance, he said, if a team is leading by more than 20 points with only a few minutes left, someone who bet against a 20-point spread is still interested in watching because the results of their wager could still change.

"The only people watching and seeing the beer commercials or the car commercials are the bettors," he said.

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