

NFL Forces Vegas Station to Spike Super Bowl Ads for Casino - AOL News

Written by Administrator

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LAS VEGAS -- The NFL forced the Fox affiliate station here to dump \$360,000 in advertisements for a casino conglomerate minutes before Sunday's kickoff for Super Bowl XLV, the latest maneuver in an ongoing battle between the football league and the nation's gambling capital.

Station Casinos, which owns 18 casinos that cater to southern Nevada residents, was

set to launch its ["We Love Locals" campaign](#) during the Packers-Steelers tussle with [five 30-second spots](#) promoting giveaways and featuring employees talking about how much they adore their customers.

The campaign was referenced in [an article](#) in Sunday's Las Vegas Review-Journal, prompting [this blog post](#) questioning whether the ads were permissible under the NFL's strict policy banning any gambling or casino-related ads. NFL executives saw the post and stepped in at the last minute to inform [KVVU in Las Vegas](#) that the commercials could not appear during the local advertising windows during the Super Bowl.

NFL spokesman Brian McCarthy did not elaborate, but he did confirm the sequence of events in an e-mailed statement to AOL News today: "Correct. We had a conversation before the game with Fox which informed the station it could not air the spots."

Nearly 300,000 tourists were expected in Las Vegas to watch the Super Bowl, the biggest betting event of the year. By contrast, Dallas Stadium was able to hold about 100,000 spectators.

The Nevada Gaming Control Board has not released figures on the amount of wagering on Sunday's game, but in past years the number has exceeded \$80 million per game. That's a tiny fraction of the illegal betting on the Super Bowl occurring across the nation; Nevada is the only state in the U.S. that allows legal, regulated sports gambling.

The NFL prohibits "ads for specific hotels, casinos and other institutions that house gambling" and "may not contain any gambling references or imagery," according to a December 2009 memo. Among examples of prohibited images were "slot machines, dice, cards or a wide shot of [the] Vegas Strip and casinos" but "an ad for Las Vegas tourism with pictures of golf, swimming pools and performers would be OK."

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McCarthy told AOL News last week that the ban is in place to keep sports gambling from harming professional football.

"Simply put, [gambling and sports do not mix](#) , and we are committed to keeping gambling away from our game," McCarthy told AOL News. "Sports gambling threatens the integrity of our game."

KVVU News Director Adam P. Bradshaw and Station Casinos spokeswoman Lori Nelson had not commented as of early today, so it was unclear whether the TV station lost the \$360,000 in revenue or if other commercials filled the suddenly empty slots.

Yet [Las Vegas Advisor](#) publisher Anthony Curtis found the new wrinkle in the long-standing Vegas-NFL feud "absolutely ridiculous." The idea that local Las Vegas needed to be shielded from advertisements for the region's most important industry lest the NFL's integrity be sullied seemed absurd to him.

"It's their product, they can do what they want, but are you kidding me?" Curtis told AOL News today. "In our own market, they won't even allow it? It shows the ridiculous amount of paranoia. If they have the power to do it, then they can do it, but I think it makes just absolutely no sense. It's just someone just abusing their own policy."

The flap between the NFL and Station Casinos is only the latest in a series of skirmishes between the league and Vegas.

The Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority had planned to launch its now-famous "What Happens Here Stays Here" campaign during the 2003 Super Bowl only to have the ads spiked. Last year, [CBS was chastised by NFL](#) for allowing [a Kia car ad](#) to include images of characters from "Yo Gabba Gabba!" entering the Monte Carlo Hotel-Casino and cruising down the Strip in a car.

In 2006, after NBC landed "Sunday Night Football," [the league barred the network](#) from promoting its Monday night hit, the soap "Las Vegas," during the games the night before. NBC

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moved the show to Fridays, where it sputtered to its demise the following season.

Vegas ad buyers have largely learned not to bother trying, said Rob Dondero, vice president for R&R Partners, the firm that manages the LVCVA's \$70 million destination advertising account.

Dondero told AOL News last week that R&R, too, did an end-run in recent years around the national prohibition by trying to place ads in local TV markets during the Super Bowl, but the firm has decided it's not worth the hassle.

He predicted that the NFL's prohibition would crack sooner or later when team owners start seeking new revenue streams. He said that ad sellers for stadiums in Phoenix and Denver, unaware of the NFL's policy, have approached R&R Partners about buying billboards promoting Las Vegas. Dondero's staff has had to inform the stadiums of the league's rules.

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