

Arkansas Sees March Sports Betting Drop With Casino Closures

Written by Administrator
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The three casino sportsbooks in Arkansas closed mid-March and the impact of the shutdowns can be seen in the March revenue report. The 63% drop in handle from February in Arkansas is on par with the percentage decline in other states with legal sports betting.

Arkansas reported \$1.59 million total sports betting handle in March from the Oaklawn Park, Southland and Saracen casinos, a \$2.7 million fall from February's sports betting handle. That follows in line with recent reports from states with larger sports betting markets like New Jersey (63.2%) and Pennsylvania (60%). Iowa was down 65.6% and Mississippi saw a 68.8% drop.

Casinos in Arkansas closed either March 16 or March 17, just days after all major sports leagues and sporting events were postponed or canceled as a precaution during the coronavirus pandemic. Arkansas' casinos will remain closed at least through April.

Of the \$1.59 million bet in March, \$1.37 million was paid out. Total revenue for March was \$222,371.

By comparison, February's total sports betting handle was \$4.29 million, bolstered by Super Bowl wagering. Of that amount, \$3.88 million was paid out. Total revenue for February was \$411,587. Arkansas had \$2.58 million in sports betting handle [in January](#) .

Southland Casino Racing in West Memphis, Arkansas, easily took the most wagers in March, more than double what Oaklawn Park in Hot Springs took in. Southland had a total handle of \$949,446 in March, a 53% drop from February's \$2.03 million. Oaklawn saw a 76% drop in March, going from \$1.74 million to \$424,206. Saracen Casino Resort in Pine Bluff saw just \$214,750 wagered in March, a decline of about \$310,000.

Live horse racing — albeit without spectators — is still going on at Oaklawn, home of the Arkansas Derby, which serves as a prep race for the Kentucky Derby. The Arkansas Derby has been moved from April 11 to May 2, while the Kentucky Derby slid all the way back to Sept. 5. It is usually the first Saturday in May.

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Arkansas was the ninth state to pass legislation to allow sports betting and [began accepting bets in July 2019](#).

Voters approved sports betting in November 2018, the first state to legalize it through a ballot measure. Colorado became the second state to do so in November 2019.

The state racing commission announced this week that it is considering two applications for a casino in Pope County, according to the *Arkansas Times*. The Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma and the Gulfside Casino Partnership of Mississippi will make presentations to the commission, the report said.

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