

= 2007 NBA betting scandal =

The 2007 NBA betting scandal was a scandal involving the National Basketball Association (NBA) and accusations that an NBA referee used his knowledge of relationships between referees , coaches , players and owners to bet on professional basketball games . In July 2007 , reports of an investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) were made public , which alleged that during the 2005 ? 06 and 2006 ? 07 NBA seasons , referee Tim Donaghy bet on games in which he officiated .

On August 15 , 2007 , Donaghy pleaded guilty to two federal charges related to the investigation , and a year later he was sentenced to 15 months in prison and three years of supervised release . As a result , the general reaction by the media was that the NBA 's popularity would be hurt by the news of this scandal .

= = Initial reports = =

The story first broke when the New York Post reported that the FBI was investigating allegations that an NBA referee had bet on games . The story was soon picked up by other major news agencies , as it was revealed that Donaghy was the referee under investigation . The reports claimed that Donaghy had started betting on games in 2005 , and had connections to organized crime .

The day after the initial reports , NBA commissioner David Stern said " that no amount of effort , time or personnel is being spared to assist in this investigation , to bring to justice an individual who has betrayed the most sacred trust in professional sports , and to take the necessary steps to protect against this ever happening again . " He then held a press conference on July 24 to address questions about the investigation . Although he called the Donaghy matter " an isolated case " , he also said it was " the most serious situation and worst situation that I have ever experienced " .

On July 27 , U.S. Congressman Bobby Rush of Illinois , chairman of the Energy and Commerce Commerce , Trade and Consumer Protection Subcommittee , asked to meet with Stern regarding the Donaghy matter . In a letter to Stern , Rush indicated that he might call a hearing " should the facts warrant public scrutiny . " He also said that the affair could potentially be " one of the most damaging scandals in the history of American sports . " On the same day , it was reported that a high school classmate of Donaghy 's , and the classmate 's boss , had bet on NBA games based on Donaghy 's tips . Donaghy later revealed that he was rewarded \$ 2 @,@ 000 cash for each correct pick based on the tips he would pass along .

= = = Surrender = = =

After the initial reports , Donaghy stayed at his home , before moving to a secure location to avoid the media scrutiny . He surrendered on August 15 , 2007 , and pleaded guilty to two felony charges of conspiracy . He told judges that he had used coded language to tip others about players ' physical condition and player / referee relations , and he specifically admitted to passing information about two games during the 2006 ? 07 season . In total , he received \$ 30 @,@ 000 to pass inside information to the bookies . Donaghy also admitted that he had a severe gambling addiction , and was on medication to address it . He was released on a \$ 250 @,@ 000 bond .

= = Sentencing = =

On June 11 , 2008 , Donaghy alleged in a statement through his lawyers that several series in the NBA Playoffs had been improperly refereed according to the NBA 's instructions . He alluded specifically to a playoff game where " personal fouls [resulting in obviously injured players] were ignored even when they occurred in full view of the referees " because " it was in the NBA 's interest to add another game to the series . " The game referred to was widely believed to be Game 6 of the 2002 Western Conference Finals between the Los Angeles Lakers and the Sacramento Kings , in

which the Lakers shot 27 free throws in the fourth quarter . Donaghy also referred to a playoff series where " Team 3 's Owner alleged that referees were letting a Team 4 player get away with illegal screens . NBA Executive Y told Referee Supervisor Z that the referees for that game were to enforce the screening rules strictly against that Team 4 player . " The playoff series was believed to be the first @-@ round encounter between the Houston Rockets and the Dallas Mavericks in the 2005 NBA Playoffs . The Rockets led 2 ? 0 in the series before losing in 7 games , and then @-@ Rockets head coach Jeff Van Gundy was fined \$ 100 @,@ 000 for stating that a referee was targeting Houston center Yao Ming .

On July 29 , 2008 , Donaghy was sentenced to 15 months in prison , and three years of supervised release . Although his lawyer asked for a probationary sentence , Donaghy admitted that he had " brought shame on myself , my family and the profession " .

Donaghy was released from federal prison on November 4 , 2009 . He is under supervised release by a federal parole @-@ type officer .

= = Reaction = =

Immediately after the reports were released , several writers said that the NBA 's popularity would be hurt by the news . Chris Sheridan of ESPN said that " the general American public has been turning away since the end of the Bulls ' dynasty , and this fiasco isn 't going to help bring it back " , and J. A. Adande said that " the integrity of the games just took a major hit " .

Sports gambling expert R. J. Bell , president of sports betting information site Pregame.com , tracked every game Donaghy worked from 2003 to 2007 . He discovered that during the two seasons investigated by the NBA , the teams involved scored more points than expected by the Las Vegas sports books 57 percent of the time . In the previous two seasons , this only happened 44 percent of the time . According to Bell , the odds of such a discrepancy are 1 in 1 @,@ 000 , and there was " a 99 @.@ 9 percent chance that these results would not have happened without an outside factor . " He also found 10 straight games in 2007 in which Donaghy worked the game that the point spread moved 1 @.@ 5 points or more before the tip ? an indication that big money had been wagered on the game . The big money won every time ? another indication that " something (was) going on " . However , Bell suggested that there was no way anyone who wasn 't in on the fix could have known that something was amiss about Donaghy 's actions during a game ; he said it would have been another year at the earliest before anyone could have caught on .

Handicapper Brandon Lang told ESPN that it is fairly easy for a crooked sports official to fix a game , despite Stern 's insistence that Donaghy was a " rogue official " . According to Lang , an official can directly influence the outcome of a game 75 percent of the time if he has money on the game . For instance , Lang said that a crooked NBA referee can fix the total score by calling enough fouls to get both teams in the bonus . When a game is being fixed , Lang said , the officials should be the prime suspects because the players are making too much money to risk their future . Lang also believed a bookie connected to the mob turned Donaghy in to the FBI .

As a result of the betting scandal , Stern revised the guidelines on the behavior of NBA referees during the Board of Governors ' meeting in 2007 . Despite the labor agreement for referees , which restricted them from participating in almost all forms of gambling , it was revealed that about half of the NBA 's officials had made bets in casinos , albeit not with sportsbooks . In addition , almost all referees had admitted to engaging in some form of gambling . Stern stated that " [the] ban on gambling is absolute , and in my view it is too absolute , too harsh and was not particularly well @-@ enforced over the years " . The gambling rules were revised to allow referees to engage in several forms of betting ? though not on sports . There were several other referee @-@ related rule changes made : the announcement of referees of a game was moved from 90 minutes before tip @-@ off to the morning of the game , to reduce the value of the information to gamblers ; referees received more in @-@ season training and counseling on gambling ; more thorough background checks were carried out ; the league declared its intention to analyze the statistical relationship between NBA games and referees ' gambling patterns for those games ; and the interactions between referees and NBA teams were made easier and more formal .

