

Compulsive Gambling Big Time Losers

Barkley Tells of Big Gambling Losses

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Former NBA star Charles Barkley openly talked about his gambling Wednesday, revealing that he has lost an estimated \$10 million.

"My agent has really worked with me to try to get it where I can go and gamble and have fun," said Barkley, whose favorite game is blackjack.. "That's easier said than done.

"Do I have a gambling problem? Yeah, I do have a gambling problem. But I don't consider it a problem because I can afford to gamble."

The admission, which came in an ESPN interview, makes the popular TNT basketball commentator the latest in a string of sports figures this year who have been tied to gambling. The list includes golfer John Daly, suspended Phoenix Coyote assistant coach Rick Tocchet and Calgary Flame forward Darren McCarty.

In fact, Barkley made the comments only after being asked about Tuesday's headlines that said Daly, in his upcoming autobiography, admits gambling away \$50 million to \$60 million.

"When I gamble," Barkley said, "I should be playing \$1,000 a hand instead of \$20,000 a hand, because if I played for \$1,000 a hand I probably could lose \$50,000 to \$100,000 a hand instead of millions of dollars.

"And I've got to reach a happy medium because I've told all of the people in my life that first and foremost it's my money."

However, experts on gambling addiction say cutting back is not an answer. They say, as with drug or alcohol addictions, abstention is the answer.

"It's hard for me or anyone else to say Charles Barkley has a problem without knowing the whole story," said Bruce Roberts, executive director of the Anaheim-based California Council on Problem Gambling.

"Maybe \$10 million is a drop in the bucket for him, if he is telling the truth. You don't have a gambling *problem* unless it causes you a problem. I would need to know more to determine if he has a problem."

Roberts indicated that whether it is a problem for Barkley, it is good that he is willing to

talk about it.

"Daly showed courage in his admission," Roberts said. "Maybe this is the beginning of a good start for Barkley. Maybe it's the start of a more normal life, and I'm talking about inside his head, not outside."

Another sports figure who has been linked to the issue of gambling is National Hockey League star McCarty, who played for the Detroit Red Wings for 11 seasons and is now with the Flames.

McCarty, who publicly has talked about his penchant for poker, filed for bankruptcy last month, and the Detroit Free Press reported that documents listed his debts at \$6.2 million, which included at least \$185,000 to casinos in Detroit and Las Vegas.

The NHL is particularly sensitive to gambling right now.

In February, New Jersey authorities announced an investigation into allegations that Tocchet was part of a nationwide gambling ring that involved more than \$1.7 million in bets on professional and collegiate sports, mostly football and baseball.

Tocchet, one of Wayne Gretzky's assistant coaches, was suspended pending the outcome of the New Jersey investigation as well as one by the league.

Barkley, who says he always tries to be open and honest when doing interviews, reiterated in a later interview Wednesday with Ernie Johnson on TNT that it is his money and he does not plan to quit gambling.

"It's unfortunate it has become such a story because I was asked such an innocent question about John Daly," Barkley told Johnson. "And I said, 'I understand gambling is a bad habit.'"

"I'm going to continue gambling. I like to gamble. It's really nobody's business because it's my money. I earned it.

"I've never bet on basketball. I only go to casinos. I'm going to continue to go."

Barkley, however, repeated that he would like to not gamble as much.

It's not the first time Barkley has talked publicly about his gambling.

In October, he told The Times he had lost as much as \$1.5 million in one weekend.

"It's a stupid, bad habit, a waste of money," he said at the time. "But I love it."