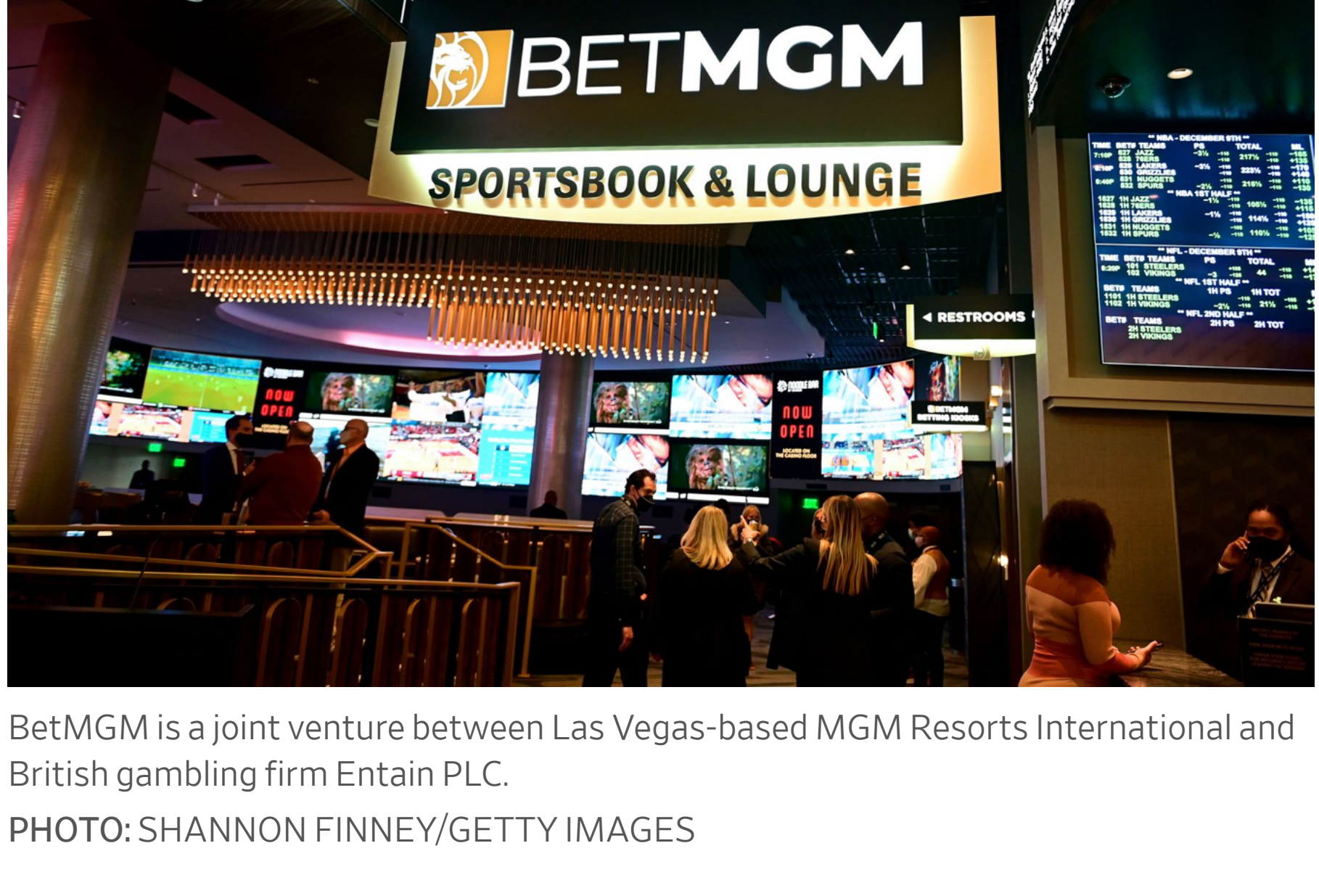




BUSINESS

Gambler Claims Online Casino BetMGM Glitches Robbed His Winnings, Fueled Addiction

Plaintiff Sam A. Antar sues online casino operator alleging it ignored game flaws and offered money to prevent him from alerting regulators



BetMGM is a joint venture between Las Vegas-based MGM Resorts International and British gambling firm Entain PLC. PHOTO: SHANNON FINNEY/GETTY IMAGES

By [Katherine Sayre](#) Following
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A New York man who said he has a gambling addiction has accused online casino operator BetMGM of plying him with free bets to keep him from reporting game glitches to regulators, according to a lawsuit filed Wednesday.

Sam A. Antar alleged that BetMGM's online blackjack and other games repeatedly disconnected from BetMGM's servers, often while he had favorable hands, which wiped out potential winnings, according to the lawsuit. His winnings at times weren't available to him until he deposited more money into his account, further fueling his compulsive gambling that included more than \$29 million in bets in nine months, the lawsuit said.

Mr. Antar complained about the games' problems to account managers and corporate executives, and in response he received free betting credits known as bonuses to continue gambling, according to the suit. Mr. Antar was told by an account manager that the company was compiling similar complaints from other BetMGM customers, the suit said.

The lawsuit was filed in New Jersey Superior Court. BetMGM is a joint venture between Las Vegas-based [MGM Resorts International](#) and British gambling firm [Entain PLC](#). The lawsuit accused BetMGM, MGM Resorts, Entain and the Borgata casino in Atlantic City, N.J., of consumer fraud, racketeering and gross negligence, among other civil claims. BetMGM also operates a Borgata-branded online casino app in New Jersey.

A BetMGM spokeswoman declined to comment. A spokesman for MGM Resorts referred a request for comment to BetMGM. An Entain spokesman didn't immediately comment.

Mr. Antar said in the lawsuit that when he gambled while in New Jersey he experienced thousands of disconnections that occurred every 15 to 30 minutes between May 2019 and January 2020. During this time, he made more than 100,000 online bets, including multiple-day binges at all hours, as well as more than 30 visits to the Borgata, the suit said.

BetMGM didn't fix the problems because the games were profitable, the lawsuit alleged. Instead, Mr. Antar was given bonuses that at one point amounted to more than \$30,000 a month, according to the suit.

In 2019, Mr. Antar was accused by New Jersey prosecutors and by the Securities and Exchange Commission of defrauding friends and family in an investment scheme that allegedly helped fuel his gambling at the time. He pleaded guilty in New Jersey Superior Court to second-degree theft by deception. In 2013, Mr. Antar was sentenced to 21 months in federal prison for taking \$225,000 in a fraudulent investment scheme and spending the money in part on gambling.

Mr. Antar is the nephew of Eddie Antar, the famed founder of the Crazy Eddie electronics stores in the 1970s and 1980s [who bilked investors out of more than \\$74 million](#). Eddie Antar died in 2016.

New Jersey is one of six states that have legalized online casino games, such as blackjack and slots. The spread of online casinos in the U.S. has been slower than sports betting, which has been legalized in 36 states and the District of Columbia. Last year, gambling companies in New Jersey took in nearly \$1.4 billion from online casinos, compared with about \$816 million from sports betting, according to New Jersey gambling regulators.

According to the lawsuit, Mr. Antar received a standard message when games he was playing were interrupted, according to the suit: "DISCONNECTED—you have been disconnected from the server. Please refresh the game to continue. If the problem persists, please contact the operator."

Mr. Antar made dozens of complaints to VIP account managers and corporate executives about the online games, but the problems weren't addressed, according to the suit. Account managers acknowledged the problems to Mr. Antar, the suit said. One manager in a recorded conversation said the company couldn't justify taking the malfunctioning game down because it was too much of a "moneymaker," the suit said.

The lawsuit described text messages, recorded telephone calls, screenshots and other records that Mr. Antar collected during this time.

In an October 2019 text message, a VIP account manager asked for Mr. Antar to agree not to contact the "DGE," referring to the New Jersey Division of Gaming Enforcement, the state's regulatory division for gambling, according to the suit. After agreeing, Mr. Antar began receiving near-daily bonuses, the suit said.

The lawsuit alleged BetMGM ignored problems with its games because they were profitable. In one incident, Mr. Antar was up \$47,000 in online blackjack when his balance was wiped out by a disconnection, according to the suit. In another blackjack game, his balance was more than \$103,000 when he was kicked out, and the balance showed as \$0 when he logged back in, according to the suit.

In May 2019, Mr. Antar urged a VIP account manager to get the games fixed, according to the lawsuit, and told him, "[w]hen you're a gambler you keep going at it you can't help yourself."

According to the lawsuit, in July of that year, Mr. Antar complained again, and the same manager sent a text message in response, according to the suit: "Hey Sam, we have to come up with a good plan. Let's do a 5K deposit match per week?"

Mr. Antar said he was told on Jan. 16, 2020, that he had been banned from all of the companies' properties and online games, according to the lawsuit. But in August of this year, Mr. Antar received an email from the company asking Mr. Antar to authenticate his player's account with an invitation to "Bet Now," according to the suit.

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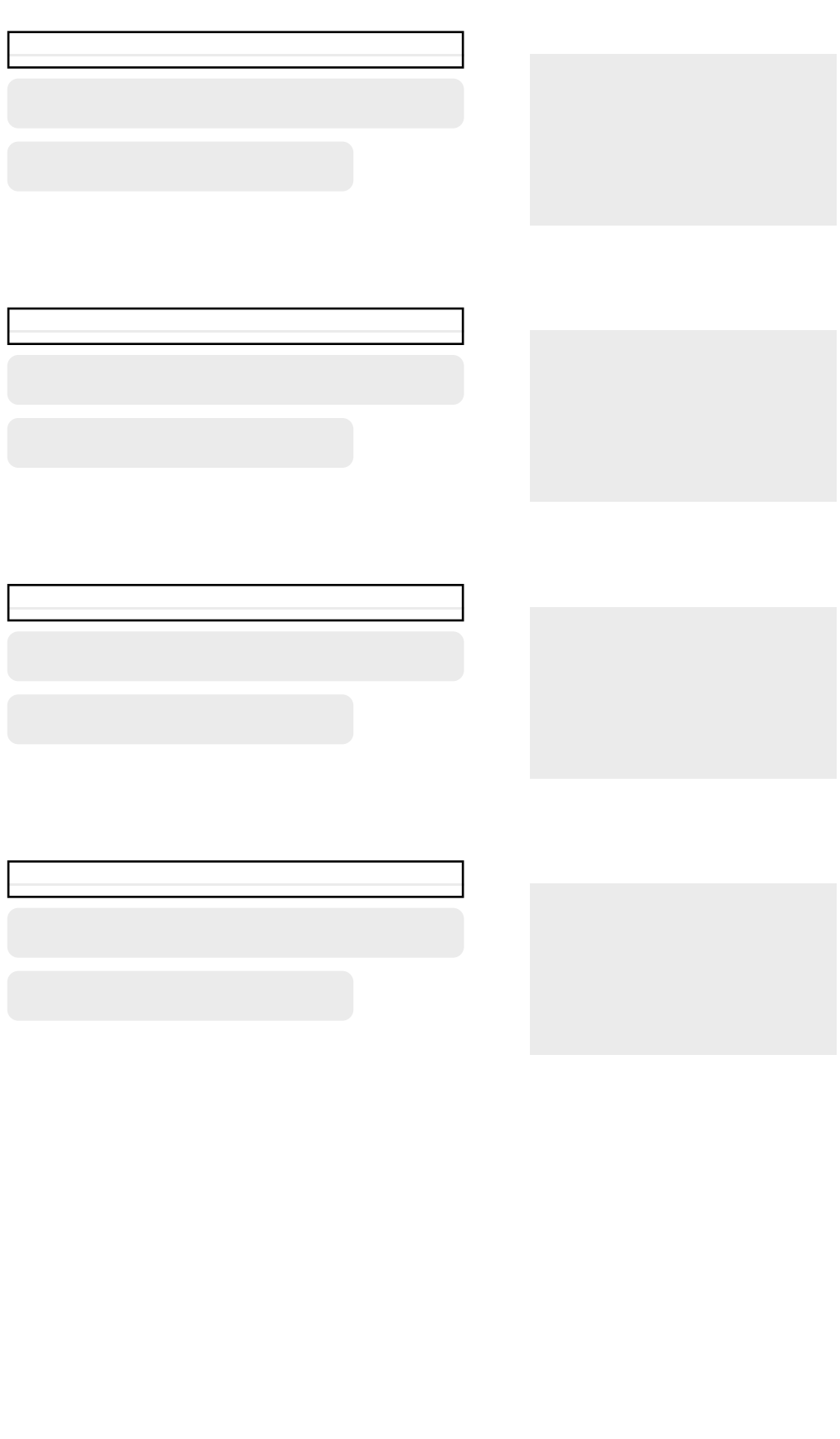
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