

Katie Mox Isn't a Gambling Expert Barking at You

Derek Futterman | November 1, 2021 | Barrett Sports Media

Sports betting is becoming an omnipresent element of sports media, with many networks introducing new programming geared towards the flourishing sector of the industry. In fact, MSG Networks recently announced an expanded sports betting programming lineup featuring the premiere of two new shows, *Odds With Ends* and *The Bettor Half *Hour*, along with the expansion of *The Betting Exchange*.

While she was always a sports fan, Katie Mox did not initially look to work in the world of sports and entertainment. As a graduate of The Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising and ardent fan of the NFL's San Francisco 49ers, Mox originally sought to work in design and visual communications and found her career path in the field of public relations. Over fifteen years, Mox worked for various public relations firms, serving in managerial positions and communicating with clientele. It was not until recently that she began working in the world of digital content creation, which started through her Instagram account and helped land her a gig as co-host of *The Betting Exchange* on MSG Networks. She says the drastic career shift came as a result of her sports fandom and enthusiastic proclivity to make her insights and opinions known.

"I always wanted to be on-air and to do something hosting," said Mox. "At first, it started as a passion project to talk about sports and gambling. In the pandemic, I saw... an opportunity to really go for it and make this transition for myself into sports broadcasting."

Mox was laid off from her public relations job in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic because of a lack of work, an impetus that she avows hastened her subsequent transition into sports broadcasting. Yet she has a competitive advantage as a result of her background in public relations in that she knows how to effectively position herself as a brand among the assemblage of aspiring on-air personalities. In being able to work on a team, Mox is aware of the implications her actions have on others, and vice-versa, and possesses innate wherewithal to make informed, strategic decisions.

"I am so lucky to have worked in public relations for so long because I understand the other side of the business," said Mox. "Being a content creator, I know what is expected from me from the marketing team, the public relations team, etc. Sometimes when you are working with influencers, they do not have the knowledge of the business side of it. I feel like it's a benefit to me because I've been on the marketing side. I know how to make sure I'm doing everything I need to do to make the client happy."

Following the nearly four-and-a-half-month pause on professional sports in the United States due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the popularity of sports betting began to significantly proliferate. With various new sportsbooks heavily advertising across radio and television, along with specialized programming created for bettors, it is a booming

sector of the industry that shows no signs of slowing down. While the betting itself is centered on sporting events, Mox affirms that it is the entertainment it provides and camaraderie it cultivates that has made it wildly popular and profitable today, especially among younger audiences, something she and many others call “wagertainment.”

“There’s an entire community of people who love sports betting not just for getting skin in the game, but also for the community,” said Mox. “I do think sportsbooks are trying to figure out how to reach out to this millennial group of gamblers.”

One way to do that — through traveling. Mox serves as the host of the web series *Ride with Katie Presented by Betfred Sports* on the sports betting platform “The Gameday,” which combines the thrill of traveling to different sporting events around the country with sports betting. The content, which routinely has at least 10,000 views each week on YouTube, shows a different side of gambling that helps to eliminate the initial stigma surrounding it.

“It’s making [gambling] more accessible and demonstrating the camaraderie about it,” explained Mox, who began hosting the show in September 2021. “It’s also showing gambling in a different light and [that] it’s fun [and] doesn’t have to be scary. You certainly should be smart about it, but I think it reaches a new audience and makes it more fun and accessible to the young audience.”

Sports betting has adopted its own vernacular through use of terms such as “parlays,” “teasers” and “point spreads,” terminology that sports fans looking to immerse themselves in the world of sports betting may be unfamiliar with. Shows, such as Mox’s *The Betting Exchange* on MSG Networks, help to eliminate that boundary by explaining the nuances of sports betting through the context of current sports events. The show, which initially aired once a week, has broadened and is now live on MSG Networks Monday through Thursday at 5:30 p.m. E.S.T.

“I think MSG is bridging the gap between the younger generation of gamblers who want to be entertained with an easier access point that’s not as intimidating,” said Mox. “We explain parlays, teasers [and] how to use those [sic]. We give our best bets; We play games and provide some value with the picks as well.”

Along with Mox, *The Betting Exchange* is co-hosted by sports betting personality Jeff Johnson, and will feature former New York athletes, such as former Giants wide receiver David Tyree and former Jets safety Erik Coleman, to talk about sports betting.

“I think MSG is the only network that is putting former athletes on and talking about sports betting, which I think is really interesting to a younger audience,” expressed Mox. “Who knows more about the game than they do?”

Expanding the demographic of sports betting is a mission every sportsbook has embarked upon, frequently advertising on sports networks in creative, captivating ways to try to appeal to new segments of the marketplace. With a background in public

relations, Mox knows that understanding that audience should be the number one priority in bolstering their reach.

“It’s understanding that [the audience doesn’t] want experts barking at them telling them what they should be doing,” explained Mox. “They want real gamblers and people in front of them providing education and value, but not necessarily taking themselves too seriously. As long as sportsbooks are looking to media companies, and they are understanding this new audience that wants to be entertained more so than [have] experts [bark things] at them, they want to ride the wave with you.”

As an on-air host and content creator, Mox does not try to masquerade herself as a consistent, undisputed winner in her betting practice. Rather, she is realistic with the audience in that success in “having skin in the game” is not a guarantee and a practice that, while it is consumed as a form of entertainment, is best done responsibly.

“The reality is that you’re not winning all the time,” said Mox. “People pretending to win all the time lose the new audience. I think MSG Networks and The Gameday do a great job of showing the reality of it.”

Some sports broadcasts have implemented live odds and talk about sports betting into the game broadcast, including MSG Networks. The network regularly promotes its newly introduced “MSG Pick ‘Em” app during its game programming, which allows fans to win or split a jackpot based on the amount of points they earn answering questions about that night’s game before it happens. Mox, though, believes persistently trying to discuss sports betting during the live game action is perhaps taking it a bit too far for now.

“There is a fine line with in-game broadcasts,” said Mox. “That might be a little bit too much because you want to make sure everything is still fair.”

With all 50 states moving to legalize sports betting, sports consumption habits are shifting across multiple platforms in a direction indicative of betting’s sizable expansion. There are ostensibly no signs of this exponential growth promptly coming to a halt, especially within the National Football League, as sportsbooks are partnering with broadcast networks and professional sports leagues to create focused content tailored to the relevant demographics.

“I think sports betting content is going to be synonymous with sports in the next five to 10 years,” said Mox. “Everyone wants a piece of this pie because it’s a huge market. I think you’re going to see it everywhere.”