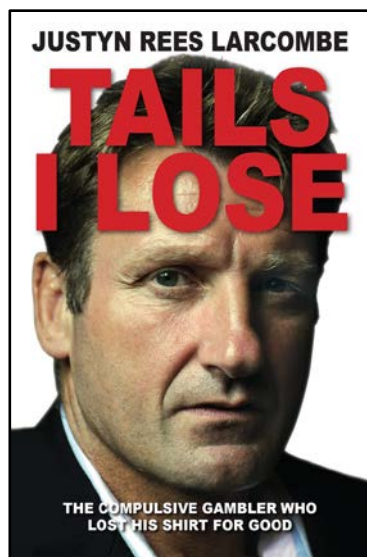




Tails I Lose

The Compulsive Gambler Who Lost His Shirt For Good

Justyn Rees Larcombe

'I am no psychologist or professor of addictive behaviour. This is not a recovery manual. I just want to share my story in the hope that, in a world of instant gratification and a growing social acceptance of gambling as a legitimate activity, the truth that gambling can and does shatter lives will be accepted and acknowledged by the public, the betting industry and the government.'

Justyn Rees Larcombe

A little flutter. Harmless fun. A sociable and often glamorous way to try your luck.

This is how gambling is frequently portrayed in television and social media advertising. Almost three quarters of all adults in the UK have gambled at some point in the last year, but just under 1 per cent of them are compulsive gamblers. The gaming industry says that's a tiny percentage – but that 'tiny percentage' represents 500,000 people whose lives are controlled and often devastated by this addiction, not to mention the wider knock on effect on their family, friends and colleagues.

Justyn Rees Larcombe was one of those 1%. After a glittering career in the army, he became a high flyer in the world of insurance in the City. He had a much loved wife and family, a beautiful home, a dream car. But one day, on a whim – 'I was 40 years old and feeling sorry for myself' - he placed a £5 bet on a tennis game, setting into motion a 3 year downward spiral which would eventually result in the loss of his job, his family, his home, his self respect and a staggering £750,000.

Like many addicts, Justyn kept his gambling secret from those closest to him. As he lost more money, he started to gamble larger amounts in search of 'the big win that would allow me to pay off some of the credit card debt.' Once his own savings had run out, he used his wife's savings, the deposit they had saved for a new house, his company credit card and the sale of precious family heirlooms to fund his addiction. Twice he cleared his debts or closed his betting account, but each time he started betting again within a short time. When his 4 year old son had a serious epileptic fit, Justyn held his hand as the ambulance rushed them both to hospital - whilst checking his progress on sporting bets via his phone in the other hand.

When Justyn placed a £17,000 bet on a tennis game – and lost it all – he stumbled into the 'murky world' of online loans; at the same time, he discovered online casinos. It was a dangerous combination. 'Online betting', writes Justyn, 'rarely feels like spending money... the remoteness of the currency makes the bet seem harmless.' At the height of his addiction, Justyn was placing up to a thousand bets over a 16 hour period on a typical day, but he still didn't accept that he had a problem with gambling. 'Gambling was my medication,' he writes, 'anaesthetic for the horrible reality of the life I had created.' As his debts built up and his desperation grew, Justyn lied to his best friend and his mother to persuade them to lend him money. He left his son strapped into the car for 2 and a half hours while he gambled online when he was meant to be taking him to the park. He sold his wedding ring and frittered away the proceeds almost immediately. He lost his job but placed a £200 bet on a tennis game on the way home.

Eventually the inevitable happened. His wife found out the truth about his gambling and confronted him – 'shocked, hurt and disgusted'. When she left him, taking their sons with her, he initially attended counselling but then sank into depression and started drinking heavily and gambling again. Having sold everything of any value in their home to fund his habit, he hit rock bottom. One day, his parents and brother arrived to tell him his house had come to the end of its lease and to take him home with them. He packed his few remaining possessions into a bin bag and went back to his childhood home to begin his humiliating, long and painful journey to recovery.

>> see over for author details >>

Today **JUSTYN REES LARCOMBE** is a trained money adviser and a debt advice volunteer. After coming very close to divorce, he is now living with his wife and sons again in Kent. He is in training for a cross Channel swim in August 2014 to raise money for a charity to help children suffering from hemiplegia, from which his son suffers. Justyn has a rising profile in the media, talking about the dangers of gambling and offering support and advice to those coping with gambling addiction. Talking about his motivation for writing this book, he explained, 'I wanted people to know that there is a downside to gambling; that, although many people gambled responsibly, there were some whose lives were destroyed. There is so much advertising and glamour surrounding the industry, I just wanted people to know the darker, dirtier side.'

**Justyn Rees Larcombe is available for interviews
and to take part in discussions linked to the themes explored in this new book.
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