

Written by Administrator

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888 is preparing to launch its own brand of online casino games in the US. Photograph: Sarah Lee for the Guardian

London-listed 888 Holdings said it plans to launch online poker and casino games under its own brand in [New Jersey](#) this year when the US state ends a ban on internet [gambling](#).

Internet betting was banned by Congress in 2006, dealing a blow to companies such as 888 which had set up in the US. However, tax-hungry states are now relaxing rules, creating opportunities for European players with years of expertise in the sector.

888 already has an agreement to make its technology available to US company Caesars Interactive Entertainment, one of a number of Atlantic City casino operators that are preparing to move into the online market.

But 888's chief executive, Brian Mattingley, said targeting New Jersey's gamblers with its own brand should allow it to maximise revenues from the largest and most lucrative of the three US states that are opening up their markets.

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"We are providing the platform for Caesars but we are providing the one-stop shop that 888 is renowned for across Europe," he said.

"We are extremely well positioned in the US and are working with the regulators in Nevada, Delaware and New Jersey as these three states become ready to open," he added.

Ralph Topping, chief executive of bookmaker William Hill, warned last week that fierce initial competition for consumers in New Jersey risked creating a "bit of a bloodbath".

Mattingley would not be drawn on 888's marketing budget for New Jersey but said it would be carefully controlled.

He said analyst forecasts for total annual gaming revenues of \$450m (£292m) from New Jersey looked a "bit rich" but would not put an exact figure on the size of the market.

888 said its second-quarter revenues rose 5% to \$97m and that third-quarter trading was so far in line with its expectations.

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