



## Sporting Index

# Sporting Index Becomes First UK Customer To Deploy TrafficShield® Application Firewall As Extra Security Measure For Its Online Betting Service

### Customer Profile

**Company Name:**

Sporting Index

**Location:**

London, England

**Industry:**

Spread Betting

**Web site:**

<http://www.sportingindex.com/>

**Highlights:**

- Seamless compatibility between website security, traffic management and SSL encryption.
- Reduces training and support issues.
- Ample capacity for future expansion.

**About Sporting Index:**

Sporting Index is a world leader in its field; having captured approximately 70% of the UK's sports spread betting market.

### Executive Summary

Sporting Index is recognised as the world leader in its field, having captured approximately 70% of the UK's sports spread betting market. The company has always embraced new technology and launched the UK's first java based mobile betting application as well as the UK's first interactive TV spread betting system.

In 2005, with strong growth in the market, senior management decided to upgrade its technology platforms and reassess its hosting needs. As part of this process, Sporting Index is the first UK customer to deploy the TrafficShield Application Firewall.

In a fully redundant TrafficShield configuration alongside its F5 Networks' BIG-IP 3400's, it provides an effective solution to website security, SSL encryption and load balancing without compromising performance.

The benefits of reduced device administration and improved security are helping Sporting Index to keep pace with the burgeoning market, improving performance and reliability, and effectively dealing with usage spikes from even the biggest sporting events.

### Challenge

In 1992, Sporting Index was founded with just 5 members of staff and 50 clients. The company now caters for well over 40,000 spread bettors with an expanded team of over 100 staff, half of which are based on the trading desk. As an early pioneer in the market, Sporting Index has used technology and its prominent market position to achieve a number of UK and worldwide firsts.

In 2003, it launched the UK's first java-based mobile betting application. In February 2004, Sporting Index placed sports spread betting at the heart of Sky's interactive service, aligning itself with the growing coverage of live sport on television. This service enables clients to watch live sport and place bets (whilst watching the game) as the action evolves.

It was in 2000, however, that Sporting Index launched the first truly interactive sports spread betting website as IT Director, Hugo Smith explains, "Internet-based spread betting was a very new concept then and you could count on one hand the number of sites worldwide."

"Unlike a traditional shopping website, our servers receive huge traffic spikes during sporting events such as the Champions League, Rugby World cup or a major premiership football match."

"It was in 2000 that we initially started using the F5 BIG-IP product. After considering a number of vendors, BIG-IP was technically far superior and F5 Networks had both a proven track record with similar types of web sites. They also looked like they were going to be here for the long haul and not just a here-today and gone tomorrow startup."

The popularity of Sporting Index grew rapidly alongside the adoption of the Internet and now equates to 70% of the company's betting transactions.



“Alongside the pair of BIG-IP switches, we also deployed SSL encryption devices and several anti-hacking software applications. Aside from version updates and continual threat assessment, our infrastructure has easily scaled to meet demand over the intervening 4 years.”

In 2005, senior management decided to reevaluate its infrastructure, hosting and security procedures at a time to coincide with a server upgrade. Smith comments, “Like most businesses, we have planned technology upgrades and this year we decided to look at not just server performance but at a whole host of other areas ranging from hosting to IT management issues.”

“Although we had been happy with our BIG-IP switches, it is always wise to look at the market during a technology refresh to see if better solutions are available and how they will benefit our current and future plans.”

“We have run an Application Firewall for sometime alongside other security procedures and our past experiences with Magnifier (now part of F5) made choosing TrafficShield a natural choice, although we did explore other options,” Smith adds.

Sporting Index looked at leading competing products alongside F5’s as Smith explains, “We looked at each product range in some details as a major technology refresh has a big impact on our business over a number of years. There were several key factors that placed the F5 Networks solution ahead of its rivals.”

“Firstly, the integration of TrafficShield with BIG-IP is very strong and provides us with the same benefits without performance degradation. This solution also removes compatibility issues and potential support problems that can arise when multiple vendors shift blame to another part of the architecture.”

TrafficShield offers unmatched protection for browser-based applications and ensures that users perform only activities known to be legal and blocks any unknown action or transaction data or type.

“The integrated option also allows us to focus the training of our IT department and manage the device from a single interface without potential confusion.”

“The last major consideration was the consistency of F5 products in the past and the strong likelihood of them being around over the next decade.” He adds.

### Solution

Sporting Index also decided to implement SSL encryption inside the BIG-IP system as a replacement for its farm of nCipher-enabled servers. The move to hardware SSL within the BIG-IP device has made SSL encryption much more seamless and less affected by usage spikes.

ITAction, the preferred IT solution provider to Sporting Index and an accredited F5 Partner, carried out the bulk of the migration and implementation.

As IT Action Managing director Yogesh Patel comments, “Both during and after migration of the Sporting Index infrastructure to its new hosting location, we have utilised the dual uplink ability of the BIG-IP to make sure we have redundancy of connectivity supplier, which is vital in making sure the service is always available.”

“Implementing the BIG-IP and TrafficShield was the smoothest part of the migration and by running redundant pairs at both sites, we were able to switch over with zero downtime to the Sporting Index service,” Patel concludes.

With Sporting Index now relocated to a new hosting facility and the technology refresh complete, Smith is confident that the right choice was made, “TrafficShield has been a good investment for us that sits within a range of security measures designed to protect our Internet services.”



“By having F5 Networks as the supplier of our traffic management, SSL and Application Firewall, we have simplified our management duties and reduced any possible compatibility issues, which is a major benefit.”

“In the all the time we have deployed first Magnifier and then TrafficShield, we have yet to have a security breach and as we deploy new web services and applications, we are able to update our TrafficShield policies to help keep 100% of our records secure.”

“The F5 Networks vision of having a fully integrated solution with TrafficShield within BIG-IP is something we are looking forward to and maybe something for the next technology refresh whenever that takes place,” Smith concludes.

### About F5

F5 enables organizations to successfully deliver business-critical applications and gives them the greatest level of agility to stay ahead of growing business demands. As the pioneer and global leader in Application Traffic Management, F5 continues to lead the industry by driving more intelligence into the network to deliver advanced application agility. F5 products ensure the secure and optimized delivery of applications to any user - anywhere. Through its flexible and cohesive architecture, F5 delivers unmatched value by dramatically improving the way organizations serve their employees, customers and constituents, while lowering operational costs. Over 9,000 organizations and service providers worldwide trust F5 to keep their businesses running. The company is headquartered in Seattle, Washington with offices worldwide. For more information go to [www.f5.com](http://www.f5.com).