# Paddy Power enters mainstream entertainment with First Dates sponsorship



Irish gaming company Paddy Power has entered a new venture in mainstream entertainment by securing a sponsorship deal with Channel 4’s popular reality series "First Dates." The partnership, which commenced on Monday, April 7, 2023, is part of Paddy Power's ongoing strategy to enhance its brand visibility beyond the realm of sports betting, diversifying its audience reach.

The sponsorship arrangement, which is expected to last for 14 months, follows a successful collaboration a year prior with ITV's game show "Password." According to Leah Spears, the brand director at Paddy Power, this latest move aligns with the company's "entertainment-first" philosophy. She remarked, “We’ve always considered ourselves to be an entertainment brand more than a gambling brand. Even our social channels never talk about betting – it’s all about fun, mischief and cultural relevance.”

"First Dates," which has been a mainstay of Channel 4 since its launch in 2013 and has received a BAFTA nomination, creates a fitting platform for Paddy Power to attach itself to a culturally significant programme. The new deal will feature the launch of 19 original idents throughout the sponsorship period, which will be presented in a fictional setting known as 'Café du Chance'. These promotional spots will be integrated into episodes across Channel 4 and E4, notably amplifying their presence during festive periods including Valentine's Day and Christmas.

In the idents, brand ambassador Peter Crouch is central, taking on multiple roles such as chef, waiter, and maître d', as he navigates through various scripted dating scenarios filled with humour and common dating experiences, from awkward moments to familial surprises. Spears explained the rationale behind the styling, noting, “Like gaming, dating is full of moments where you wish you could just have another go,” illustrating how relatable these experiences are to both the dating show and gaming.

This shift towards non-sporting content reflects Paddy Power's aim to engage a broader audience, particularly women, who have increasingly participated in gaming culture. Spears noted, "Gaming has become a space where more women are active, and 'First Dates' is the kind of environment that allows us to speak to them more directly.”

The collaboration extends beyond television, with plans to leverage digital and social media platforms to create engaging content that corresponds with key moments on "First Dates." An emphasis on real-time engagement through platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube is intended to foster ongoing interaction with audiences. According to Spears, “We work best as a brand when we react,” capturing and amplifying cultural moments as they arise within the show.

Spears also acknowledged the need for responsibility in these partnerships, recognising that the appearance of gaming brands in mainstream media may raise concerns. “We’re heavily regulated and rightly so. We only partner with brands and programs that align with our values and where we can show up safely. 'First Dates' ticked all of those boxes. It’s responsible, it’s inclusive and it’s about giving people another chance,” she elaborated.

With "First Dates" planned to run until June 2026 and an ongoing desire to branch out into additional entertainment partnerships, Paddy Power's engagement strategy represents an ambitious avenue amidst a changing landscape of gaming and entertainment. As the women’s sporting calendar approaches major events in 2025, it appears the brand is keen to continue innovating within culturally relevant contexts, thereby betting on a broader cultural engagement rather than focusing solely on its traditional sports audience.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.whichbingo.co.uk/news/paddypower-sponsorship-of-the-darts-world-championship-and-the-green-treble-20/> - Highlights Paddy Power's strategy of using creative and humorous approaches in its sponsorship deals, such as the PDC World Darts Championship, aligning with its entertainment-focused branding.
* <https://news.paddypower.com/propaganda/2024/08/30/paddy-power-password-our-new-slot-game-to-celebrate-itv-show-launch/> - Corroborates Paddy Power's engagement with mainstream entertainment through its sponsorship of ITV's game show 'Password' and the launch of related slot games, showcasing its entertainment-first philosophy.
* <https://www.pokernews.com/news/2022/11/pokerstars-and-paddy-power-join-forces-2023-irish-open-42485.htm> - Provides evidence of Paddy Power's collaborations with other brands under Flutter Entertainment, such as PokerStars, demonstrating its ability to partner across different platforms.
* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Dates_(British_TV_series)> - Outlines the background and popularity of Channel 4's 'First Dates,' providing context on why it would be a fitting platform for Paddy Power's brand enhancement strategy.
* <https://www.channel4.com/press/news/channel-4-acquires-first-dates-australia> - Supports the significance of 'First Dates' as a culturally relevant program, aligning with Paddy Power's goal to engage broader audiences.