



РУССИЯ

reading about, online gambling cheating has not yet surpassed live poker and casino cheating. In fact, it is still way behind.

Because of all the press the UltimateBet and Absolute Poker online cheating scams got, and the alleged involvement of an ex-WSOP champ, as well as the recent major network coverage of the final table of the 2008 WSOP Main Event, brick-and-mortar cheating has been getting little public notice—in spite of the fact that it goes on every day in numerous locales throughout the gambling world.

As I write this article, and while the next online poker and casino scams are being plotted, Russian brick-and-mortar poker-cheat teams are circulating widely throughout Europe and have penetrated London's poker rooms. I would say that in the real UK casino cheat world, Russians make up at least 50 percent of the cheaters. They mainly work collusion and card-swapping scams, and they are damn

good. I observed one of these teams working London's Victoria Casino poker room as recently as last August. They fleeced some well-known Brit players and didn't pick up any heat doing it. They love to hit UK and other European casinos during the big tournaments.

More serious, and a major threat to the world's brick-and-mortar casinos, especially poker rooms, are reports I've received that Russian teams are now getting into laser card-marking operations, which would no doubt be the most dangerous (and lucrative for them) brick-and-mortar poker-room scam yet seen. Other Russian high-tech casino cheating teams are also operating in the table-game areas of both European and US casinos, mainly targeting roulette tables, where, with their gadgetry, they have the ability to accurately predict in which sections of numbers the ball will land. If you think the 2004 London Ritz laser roulette scam and the 2005 digital-

camera three-card poker scam that hit several UK casinos are the last of the high-tech assaults on European casinos, think again. We will see much more of these than new online gaming scams.

In Asia, Macau continues to be prey for local casino cheat gangs who specialise in false-shuffle and card-tracking baccarat scams, which most definitely account for more losses than the entirety of online poker scams, even if the victims are casinos rather than players. Despite Macau boasting its state-of-the-art casino surveillance rooms and top-shelf personnel, below, on their gargantuan casino floors, they are getting cheated out of tens of thousands of dollars every day. In Las Vegas, Atlantic City and London, cheat teams with inside help are operating fruitfully. Hardly a week goes by that I don't get news of a major slot-machine scam, a recent one even implicating the mayor of Birmingham, Alabama.

Connecticut casinos, now 16 years old and boasting the largest revenues in the world despite Macau's massive casinos, continue to be the haven for casino dealers who want to rip off the casinos they work in. As has been its history, casino surveillance in Connecticut is weak and very late catching on to table-game scams and cheats. The only reason you hear so much about cheats getting busted in Connecticut casinos is because there is so much of it going on. Remember, only those busted make the news. In Mississippi, cheats are also thriving, especially in the poker rooms where good ol' American cheat teams are colluding suckers out of their money.

In the world-famous Southern California poker rooms, British organised poker cheating teams (their numbers are small compared to their US and Russian counterparts, but not their ability) seem to have taken a liking to their loose-playing Asian victims, who never seem to run out of money. Table games in California, where surveillance personnel are very weak and inexperienced, are victimised regularly and probably more often than anywhere else in the legalised gaming world.

So for you online players worried about online cheating and thinking of turning off your computer and heading to your local brick and mortar casino, you might want to reconsider the big picture. You're still safer gambling online than in your favourite real-life casino. But that's not to say that more big-time scandals won't happen online. It's only to say that they will never be able to keep pace with the scams brewing in brick-and-mortar gambling establishments. **GOM**