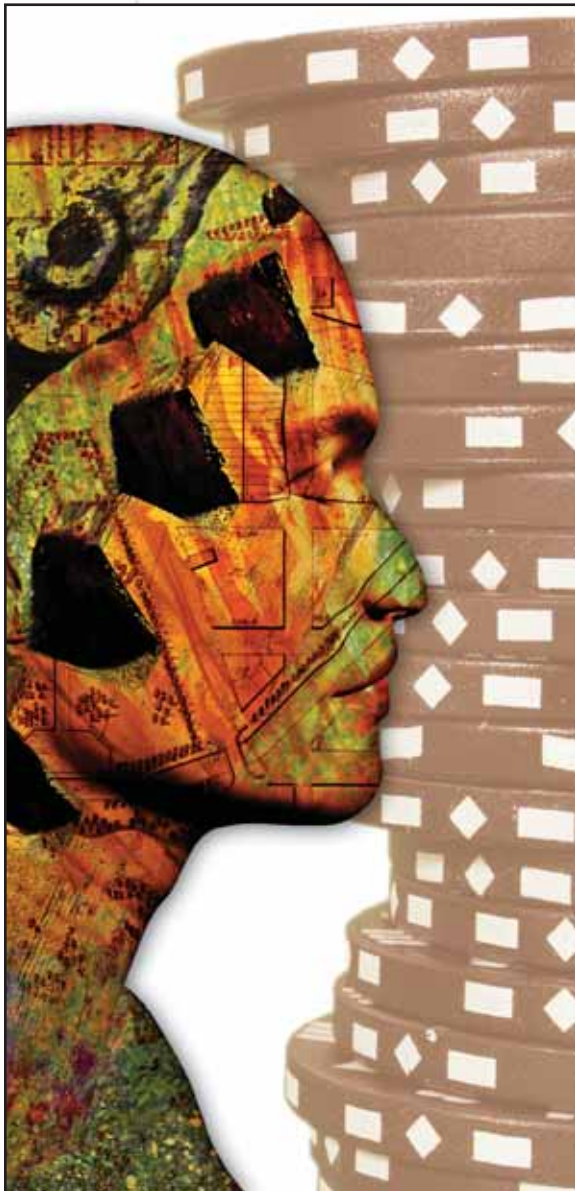


PSYCHOLOGY: THE HIDDEN KEY TO CASINO CHEATING

By Richard Marcus



W e've been hearing about a lot of high-tech and sleek casino scams recently. Last May it was the multi-million-dollar international Mini Baccarat scam. In June it was hidden cameras spying players' hole cards in a high-stakes Poker game at the Borgata in Atlantic City. Reports of these scams have been glossy and even Hollywoodesque, with the Borgata scam likened to scenes in the James Bond film *Casino Royale*. But it's not always high-tech gadgetry that gets the money from casino coffers. I never used anything of the sort to cheat casinos out of millions. All I used was my wit, guts and, of course, a little creativity. But in talking about wit, I am really talking about psychology. Sure, you may need a magician's sleight of hand to manipulate chips or a warrior's fearlessness to do so in front of all those cameras, but it was my ability to use psychology to fool casino personnel that made me so successful as a cheat.

I used psychology to my advantage by dividing cheating moves into three separate phases, each of which further enhanced my control of the situation by making dealers, floorpeople and pit bosses believe I was a high roller and not a cheater — and all the while keeping surveillance in the dark. To illustrate a classic example of psychology at work, I am going to take you through each phase of my favorite Roulette cheating move.

Like most of the moves I fashioned during the '80s and '90s, it was a pastpost move, getting the big-denomination chips down after I knew I had a winning bet. The ploy was to pastpost two black chips, \$200, straight up on a winning number for a payoff of \$7,000, which is within the maximum limits in many casinos across the world. Granted, I had no problem laying the two black chips underneath the dolly marking the number when the dealer's eyes left the layout for a split-second, but that dexterity alone was not enough to get the money. After all, two unseen black chips screaming for a \$7,000 payoff certainly warrant the attention of surveillance personnel for video verification — unless, of course, I was able to use psychology to prevent that from happening.

In this scenario, I will be the mechanic, the person at the bottom end of the table who pastposts the two black chips. The pretty

GAMING OPERATIONS ■ table games

woman on my cheating team, who we'll call "Dawn," will be the claimer, the person who takes the \$7,000 in ill-gotten chips off the table. Two other teammates will serve as checkbettors, people who

make pre-designed bets around the layout that force the dealer to make certain movements and that facilitate the split-second necessary to make the move. The psychology involved is all related

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to Dawn's presence, so I will take you step-by-step through everything she does from the moment she sits down until she gets paid and leaves the table.

The Scam

Dawn approaches the Roulette table with five black \$100 chips and sits at the top section across from the dealer. She tosses one black chip on the layout and buys in for minimum-value Roulette chips, which are \$1. The dealer gives her 100 brown Roulette chips, five stacks of 20 each. Once the dealer pushes the five stacks of 20 chips to Dawn, she immediately puts them into a 2-2-1 formation in front of her. This means there are two stacks in the front closest to the dealer, two stacks behind those, and one stack closest to her, which is shielded from the dealer by the double rows in front of it. Then Dawn surreptitiously slides her remaining four black \$100 chips into the bottom of the rear stack, completely hidden from the dealer. She does this in a one-atop-one sequence, meaning that the bottom chip is a brown Roulette chip, the one atop that is a black \$100 chip, the one atop that is another brown Roulette chip, then another black, and so on. This furtive stack is called the "mix-up" stack and remains hidden from the dealer until the crucial moment, which you will soon see.

Now Dawn begins betting her brown Roulette chips on the layout, taking care not to disturb the mix-up stack in the back. If her chip reserve dwindles from losing spins, she buys more brown chips to prevent the mix-up stack from being exposed. In her first betting sequence, she lays three brown chips on a bottom number in front of me, and I quickly scoop them up — unseen — while making my own bets. Then she proceeds to bet five brown chips on each of the bottom nine numbers straight up, #28 through #36. Meanwhile, I already have two black \$100 chips in my possession. I quickly mix them in with Dawn's three brown Roulette chips that I removed from the layout. The result is that the five chips now palmed in my hand are identical in sequence to the bottom five chips in Dawn's mix-up stack, which is still hidden from the dealer and any other casino personnel who might happen onto the game.

Now #32 wins and the dealer marks it with the dolly. Because of the actions of my checkbettors, the dealer takes his eyes off the layout for a split-second. In a well-practiced two-handed movement, I lift the dolly, remove Dawn's five brown Roulette chips, and replace them with the "juiced" stack of chips I had palmed in my hand. When it's done, there are still five chips under the dolly, but now they are: a brown Roulette chip on the bottom, a black \$100 chip atop that, then another brown, another black and another brown. Instead of \$5 on the winning number, there is now \$203 — two black \$100 chips and three brown \$1 Roulette chips.

The Psychology

Once Dawn sees that I have successfully switched the chips without being caught, she swings into action and psychology takes over. The first thing she does is lift the mix-up stack from the back of her chip reserve and place it on top of the front stack closest to the dealer, so that the dealer can now clearly see the mixed-up chips.

Then she lets out a scream and goes into a false panic. "I'm missing two of my black chips!" she cries, jumping out of her chair to add to the histrionics. "I'm missing two of my black chips! Where are they?!"

Now Dawn gets on her hands and knees and begins playacting a search of the floor. The dealer naturally looks at her as though she's a goner. Dawn stands up and begins going through her pockets like a frenzied tailor, then rifles through her handbag. "Where are my two black chips?" she repeats frantically.

While all this is going on, the dealer's eyes are eventually drawn to Dawn's stacks of brown Roulette chips and, of course, he sees the mix-up stack plainly on top. He sees the four black \$100 casino chips mixed in with the brown Roulette chips. At that moment Dawn,

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recognizing that the dealer has seen the mix-up stack, changes her tune from agonized panic to sheer joy. "Oh, my God!" she cries. "There they are! On #32! I bet them! I bet my two black chips accidentally and they won! I just won \$7,000 ... by accident!" Then she lets out an assortment of ooing and aahing sounds, offering her hand to other players at the table who gladly shake it in congratulations.

When the dealer sees Dawn's pastposted bet, two black \$100 chips sandwiched between three brown \$1 Roulette chips, he immediately notices that the mix-up sequence is exactly the same as the chips now standing on top of the front stack of her chip reserve. Thus, the picture painted in his mind is that Dawn inadvertently bet those five chips, which he assumes must have been at the top of that front stack before she placed them on #32. That perception, plus Dawn's claim to have bet the black chips by accident, removes all the pastposting heat that would have come down had those winning black chips just shown up without the rehearsed psychological ploy. When the floorman or pit boss, hearing the celebratory ruckus, comes over to the table, he too is immediately sold by the sham. He sees a pretty woman jumping up and down for joy, her mix-up stack that corresponds to the "mistaken" bet, and the distance she is from the actual winning chips, which are at the bottom of the layout. All the jubilation further removes suspicion by creating a happy atmosphere. The last thing on the floorman's mind is that she pastposted the bet. Even if it did cross his mind, it is evident that Dawn could not have tampered with the chips because she is too far away from them. The final *coup de grace* is when she tosses the dealer a black chip as a toke, outwardly a measure of her joyful generosity, but secretly another psychological ploy to keep the casino personnel on her side. Then she leaves the table with a big smile and, in her wake, the casino is a "merry" victim.

This move and claim was incredibly powerful. The first time I did it was in Puerto Rico, and I'll never forget the floorman's response when he came over to the table and saw Dawn jumping up and down, high-fiving everyone at the table. He smiled at her and said, "Must be your lucky day in Puerto Rico, *señorita!* I wish I could make a mistake like that. My wife would love me!" Believe me, Dawn would make many more of those "mistakes" over the years.

Rarely did casinos have a negative reaction to the move. But when they did, my team was ready with more psychological weaponry to win them over. Sometimes a sour pit boss would come to the table and tell Dawn he wasn't paying her because she hadn't intended to make the winning bet. It was not that he was suspicious of a pastpost; he simply didn't want to pay it. But Dawn, schooled in the art of taking over the situation, retorted, "What do you mean you're

not paying my bet? You would have taken it if it lost!" Which was true. If a player actually unintentionally bet two \$100 chips on a Roulette table, the bet lost and the dealer swept them away, what chance would that player have to recuperate those chips by claiming he hadn't meant to bet them? No casino anywhere would return those chips in a million years, and rightly so — anybody could claim that he hadn't meant to bet black chips when he lost.

The Phases

This example is just one of many ways psychology is used to cheat casinos, and all of my moves followed the same three distinct phases to manipulate casino personnel.

The first phase was in setting them up. In the accidental bet claim, the set-up was the mix-up stack that Dawn placed in plain view for the dealer to see at the opportune moment. In other scenarios, I had Dawn make legitimate large bets *before* the move went down, which established her as a high roller, always betting the same denomination chip to be used in the move in the same section of the layout where we would pastpost.

The second phase was during the actual move and claim, where Dawn would have an abundance of high-valued chips in plain view to further convince personnel that she was a high roller. A player with thousands of dollars in chips in front of her would only be expected to bet high.

The final phase was, after certain moves, implementing "bet-back" procedures to help the casino better digest the loss it had just suffered. For example, if we had just pastposted \$200 on a straight-up at Roulette and been paid \$7,000, Dawn would stay at the table a while and legitimately bet back several black chips before leaving. This was better than her leaving the table immediately after the move. The casino would grow comfortable with her, and, of course, male personnel would waste no time attempting to flirt with the lucky patron. As for those bosses thinking only of the casino's bottom line, they relished the chance of getting their money back from her.

But, of course, they never did.



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