

Casino Gambling CAN YOU BEAT THE Odds?

Million-dollar jackpot!" "Loosest slots in town!" "A winner every 30 seconds!" Gambling is fun. The come-on is irresistible, with a hook that doesn't quit. Everyone knows that the odds favor the house, but can a player ever beat the odds?

George Epp, a cabdriver and ex-policeman from Pleasantville, New Jersey, beat the odds (Beat them? He creamed them!) on November 29, 1982, when he hit the richest slot jackpot in history. It was at Atlantic City's Golden Nugget casino. Afterward, George hugged the machine that had paid him \$1,250,000 and asked, "Can I take it home?" He then used \$25,000 of his newfound riches to pay off old gambling debts.

George did it; why can't you? Indeed you can. But you have to realize that, like George, you will probably give the casinos many, many gifts of \$25,000 first. In fact, your losses are likely to total much more than \$1 million before you ever (if you ever) hit a million-dollar jackpot.

Professor Igor Kusyszyn of York University in Toronto, Canada, is an expert in the psychology of gambling. Kusyszyn, who

also writes under the pen name Lance Humble, says, "Most people do not gamble for the purposes of winning money." In fact, it's estimated that in the long run only one person in 100 wins money by gambling. Yet people who consistently lose gamble over and over again.

Kusyszyn explains: "Gambling releases us from the real world. The gambler very quickly . . . transports himself into a play world, a fantasy world in which he stays suspended until he is jarred back into reality by the loss of all his money."

In America the most successful creators of this fantasy world are the folks who operate the casinos in Las Vegas, Lake Tahoe, Reno and, more recently, Atlantic City, plus the proprietors of countless smaller-scale gambling dens around the country—both legal and illegal. If you choose to enter the seductive but expensive world of casino gambling—or gaming, as the image-conscious gambling industry prefers to call it—you have to know the rules or you won't stand a chance. (If you do know them, that is exactly what you *will* stand—just a chance.)

Article by Murphy James
