



The World's Greatest Casino Cheat

By Steve Karoul



Richard Marcus is the world's greatest casino cheat. Richard Marcus could hurt your casino, but Richard Marcus wants to help you.

Casino Enterprise Management recently had the chance to speak with Richard Marcus, the man considered the greatest cheater in the history of legalized gaming. He has since retired and has a new career on the other side of the fence, working as a casinos consultant in the area of game protection. *CEM* spoke with him about how he was able to cheat casinos, beat surveillance systems for more than 25 years without being caught, and how casino staffs can better protect their tables from the likes of him.

Casino Enterprise Management: Simply put, Mr. Marcus, what did it take to become the world's greatest casino cheat?

Richard Marcus: It was a combination of three things: courage, brains and a lack of greed. First and foremost, you have to overcome whatever fear you may have of getting caught. Then you have to be intelligent enough to design and carry out creative cheating moves that work. Third, you have to know when to stop — in other words, don't be greedy. The old saying about going to the well too many times applies to casino cheating as much as anything else.

CEM: Is it hard to find people with all three prerequisites?

RM: Very. Some people out there have tremendous courage, and some have rocket scientist brains, but few have both. Some have courage for many things, but not for casino cheating, where many different people, including surveillance cameras, watch your every move. A funny thing occurred back in Atlantic City one night after a big heavyweight fight. I was standing next to a New York wiseguy, watching my partner do a Blackjack pastpost move, which is switching in higher denomination chips after the bet wins. It so happened that this wiseguy was an acquaintance of my partner. He had nothing to do with our casino cheating operation, however, after witnessing the move and my partner's coolness under pressure, the wiseguy whispered: "You got guts kid. I'd sooner fight Mike Tyson than try that!" And, believe me, he would've given Mike Tyson a good fight. Guts and courage are only part of what's required to be a good cheat. Skill is an even more important requisite. Not everyone has both.

CEM: How hard was it to know when to stop?

RM: That depends on the person. For someone level-headed, as I've always considered myself to be, it was just a matter of surveying a casino after I finished a cheating move. If the move was absolutely clean with none of the casino personnel having been bothered, then I would go right back and do it again and again, as long as no one was picking up on what I was doing. But once a little heat started coming down, I would just cash out and go to another casino, even another gambling town if it got hot enough. Some cheaters keep working under adverse conditions, until they're taking tons of heat. This is imprudent and often leads to getting caught. I had the attitude that the casinos were always there for the taking, so if conditions were not right, I'd just let them hold on to "my" money until the next time. Schedules vary and staffing varies, especially in large casinos, so with a little patience I would wait until I found the weak links and then make my moves. But if I sensed any pressure or heat at shift change, I would simply cash out and leave.

CEM: What was your cheating specialty?

RM: I was a chip (check) manipulator. Either I pastposted bets after they won, or

did the opposite: greatly decreased the size of my bets when they lost, which is called dragging or pinching.

CEM: The first part about pastposting I understand. But what about decreasing the size of your bets after you lost? How was that possible? Once you lost, didn't the dealer take the chips?

[Marcus chuckles at this.]

RM: Yes, they did. But it's actually a dragging move that I'm most famous for — or, should I say, "infamous?" I came up with a Roulette move where I bet a \$5,000 chip underneath a red \$5 chip on outside Roulette bets. When the bet won, I collected five or 10 grand, depending on whether it was an even-money or 2-to-1 bet. When the play lost, I would only lose 10 bucks. I named the move "Savannah" after a stripper I knew at the time. This move is widely considered by the upper echelon surveillance people as the best casino cheating move ever — I surely agree with them. I demonstrated it at the recent World Game Protection Conference (WGPC) in Las Vegas, and the audience, which consisted of key casino personnel from all over the world, was quite impressed.

CEM: How did you do such a move without getting caught?

[Marcus chuckles again.]

RM: The key was I placed the \$5,000 chip underneath the \$5 chip in such a way that it was hidden from the dealer. In other words, the dealer knew there were two chips there, but couldn't make out the denomination of the bottom chip, and, therefore, assumed it was another \$5 chip. When the bet lost, I raked it off the layout before the dealer could sweep it. If I was caught, I'd go into a drunken routine and claim, in slurred words, that I didn't realize the ball had dropped. Then I

would put back two \$5 chips I had palmed in my hand. Because the dealer believed my original bet was just that — two \$5 chips — there was never much of a problem.

CEM: What happened when the bet won, especially if the dealer didn't know the \$5,000 chip was there?

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RM: I immediately started ranting and raving with joy, pointing to the bet, screaming, "There's my \$5,000 winning chip!" The beauty of it was that when they went to surveillance to verify it was a legit-



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imate bet and not pastposted, the cameras backed me up every time. The move sounds ridiculous, right? Well, maybe so, but it made millions, and the casinos never figured it out until I wrote about it in my memoir, *American Roulette*.

CEM: So, you're no longer a casino cheat. Are you actually helping casinos now?

RM: I retired from cheating seven years ago and have since written four books, the first of which, *American Roulette*, is being made into a feature film. I'm not ready to completely retire, so what better way for me to stay busy than by being a casino consultant? Gaming is the only thing I know in life, so that's what I'm doing to keep occupied.

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CEM: How exactly can you help casinos protect their games?

RM: I offer complete game protection training for floor staffs and surveillance departments, including everyone from dealers to cage employees. I teach dealers how to be less vulnerable to cheaters and what methods they can employ to sharpen their defenses. I actually give them a mental checklist to perform before each deal of cards, roll of dice or spin of Roulette. I teach floor people how to spot the scams — even the ones their own dealers might be involved in. I teach the surveillance department to recognize things the cameras show that are not always evident.

CEM: What do you find to be casinos' major weaknesses against cheaters?

RM: On the floor, it's mainly that dealers, floor personnel and pit bosses are all far too dependent on the cameras. They figure that, because every square inch of casino space is taped 24/7, they don't have to be on their toes. Not so. I like to say, "Remember, a camera is not going to tap a pit boss on the shoulder and say, 'The guy on Blackjack table number four just made a move.'" It has to work the other way. The people on the floor have to know what they are looking for, as well as looking at. Cameras are just like computers; if you

don't give them proper input, you don't get proper output. I teach not only the scams, but also the subtleties that indicate a scam might be in the works. It is a different type of educational approach, and casino staffs really enjoy it.

CEM: Are high-level surveillance people comfortable with learning from the world's greatest casino cheat? I mean, is there ever reluctance on their part?

RM: If so, it dissipates quickly once they listen to me. After all, who is better able to teach this stuff than someone who has spent most of his adult life doing it? Practically anyone who teaches casinos about game protection has never actually been out in the field like I have. They've never been cheaters, so there is a limit on their knowledge. In fact, at the WGPC in Las Vegas, two surveillance directors from major Las Vegas casinos told me they came to the conference only to see my presentation. Both admitted they were enlightened by what I had to say. I certainly appreciated those comments. I really do enjoy teaching casino people the tricks of the trade, and I do guarantee prospective casino clients that my services will save them thousands and thousands of dollars each year.

CEM: Do you ever miss it — the thrills of cheating, getting one over on the casinos and all their multimillion-dollar surveillance equipment?

RM: I guess that's like asking a retired athlete if he misses the spotlight. You know, sometimes I think about those days and say: "Boy, I had fun. I made good money, and I never got caught or arrested." But, as long as I stay busy now, I don't really miss it. I do, however, love telling war stories about some of my greatest cheating experiences.

CEM: Would you tell me one?

RM: No, Steve, for that you have to read my book!

For more information on Richard Marcus and his books, visit www.richardmarcus-books.com.

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