

After having seen the movie, everyone and his grandmother wants to rush out to Vegas or Monte Carlo, or stay home in London, and become a professional blackjack card counter—and make a killing! But it is really possible that the casinos in London, renowned for being stuffy and stingy, whose security staffs have escorted many a card counting team out its majestic front doors, are ready to turn their suspicious noses the other way when card counters stealth their way to their tables? Apparently it is. Apparently even the casinos across the rest of Europe have decided to make it possible.

For more than two decades, the attitude of European casinos has been “absolutely no tolerance of card counters”. The same, of course, had been true in US casinos. In Las Vegas, everything from casino security backroom strong-arm tactics to actual Gaming Control Board Enforcement Division arrests (mainly illegal ones) were carried out against card counters, and even wannabe card counters.

But suddenly casinos worldwide have decided to cash in on the newfound blackjack card counting publicity. How? By letting the counters play. The new consensus, and I agree with it, is that the vast majority of card counters and so-called card counters will only lose their money. Only a small percentage of even what can be considered professional card counting teams will make any serious money in the long-run. So casinos have now been adopting a policy of “let everyone play; we will lose to some really professional card counting teams but we will win tonnes from those professional card counting pretenders”. To me, their new policy makes great sense, and the casinos will only reap more profits due to the success and publicity of the film *21*, based on the MIT blackjack team and their new ‘open-door’ policy.

So what this really means for those few who are absolutely dedicated and disciplined enough to make a go out of professional card counting is that golden opportunities to make money will

abound—even in the UK—and I think they will last for a long time to come. If you don't want to take my word for it, take Jeff Murphy's. Murphy, a casino table-games expert as well as an ex-surveillance director and contributor to the World Game Protection Conference newsletter, wrote in the August edition that casinos across the world should indeed welcome card counters with open arms. And don't forget that his writings are targeted directly to casino executives who make decisions regarding the protection of casino assets, which, according to Murphy, are not threatened by card counters. And, as much as I hate to admit it, I have to agree with Murphy here: card counters, as a whole, will never threaten casinos. But for those few who have what it takes, there is indeed a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. **GOM**

*For more about professional card counting, go to [richardmarcusbooks.com](http://richardmarcusbooks.com)*



Illustration: Simon Oliver