

How Casinos Unwittingly make their Baccarat Dealers vulnerable to being bribed.



Let me tell you a story. Back in 2012, I was conducting an undercover game protection/anti-cheating operation for a major North American casino. Naturally, I focused a lot of attention on the baccarat tables. While watching a high-stakes game of purple-chip-and-up-play, something jumped up at my eye and shocked me. I saw a dealer turn over the Banker's first two cards before turning the Player's first two cards. Wow! I was stunned! That was a gross violation of baccarat dealing procedures.

I continued watching the game, and it happened a second, then a third time. My first thought was that the dealer was either high, stoned or half-asleep, and I figured the players at the table, all speaking a dialect of Chinese, didn't give a crap. So I walked over to the adjacent baccarat table, and guess what I saw there?

You got it! The same thing. The dealer was turning over the bank cards before the player cards. Not every hand but often enough. I then took notice that the players on the game were often speaking to the dealer, and even though I do not understand Chinese, it became apparent that the players, more specifically the player wagering on either side with the highest wager, was telling the dealer which cards to turn over first. This, in spite of the rules that state the player's first two cards must be revealed first at every baccarat table in the world.

So, what was going on in this casino? I thought. I immediately reported to the Table Games Director, and he explained to me what most of you now already know. That to satisfy the customer service demand, they allowed the players to dictate the dealing rules and procedures of baccarat to the dealers.

Well, talk about a no-no, I told the Table Games Director that that was a no-no-no-no!

Don't forget, I once cheated my own casino at baccarat as a dealer back in the '70s, doing what may have been one of the first-ever versions of the infamous False- Shuffle Scam, so I knew quite a bit about inside baccarat scams.

I succinctly expressed my concerns to the TGs Director. I said, "You're opening yourselves up for a dealer/player collusion scam which can take you for a million bucks before it hits you what happened." Then I explained to him about Asian culture, how gambling is such a big part of it, but more importantly on the dark side where Asian cheats and criminals, more so than other races and ethnic groups, tend to cheat and commit crimes only among their own, and they do not tend to rat each other out when caught (although that has softened since).

Now, let me be clear. I am not saying that Asians cheat or commit crimes more or less than anyone else. But I am saying that the uniqueness of their culture where respect within race plays a higher role than it does in the Western World, and that you have many important Asian elders playing in these high-stakes casino baccarat games, who have now been given permission to dictate the dealing of these games, all combine to create a very dangerous situation for your casinos.

The question becomes, who are these Asian dealers's bosses...their casino bosses or their high-rolling players?

So, all these factors do indeed facilitate collusion between dealers and players to scam the casino. I told the TGs Director, "You know, these baccarat players may come in the casino and blow a hundred grand or more in a night, and the same thing the next night and the night after that. You may think they have unlimited cash supply, as many of them have cash businesses. But don't ever forget one thing: these guys go broke like everyone else who loses big money at gambling.

"And when they do, it's quite easy for them to approach the dealers right on the games, in mid-play, speaking in their own language to dealers who already respect them, and, more importantly, have already been exposed to their commands on how to deal the game, and propose a collusion partnership to take the casino for a big score. And then the dealers, in some cases almost afraid to say no to these powerful "next of kin"gamblers, also secure that they'll never rat them out, are much more likely to take part in these scams."

So, I finished my admonishment to the TGs Director, and he looked at me and said while nodding, "I agree with you completely. We should insist that everyone follow the rules." Then he shrugged and said, "But there's nothing we can do about it. It's a customer service benefit we have to give to these high-rollers. If they want the dealers to turn the cards over in whatever manner, it doesn't affect the odds of the game. And if we don't let them do it, they'll just cash out their chips and go to the next casino down the road that will allow it..."

And that "down the road" has over the last decade become most major casinos in North America and Asia.

I pursed my lips and nodded, shook the TGs Directors hand and walked away.

Four months later, at that very same casino, two Asian high-roller baccarat players who owned cash businesses went bust gambling and then busted out the casino with help from the dealers in a baccarat collusion scam. When that same Table Games Director told me about it, I said, "What are you telling me for?"

So, in conclusion, I'll say that in a perfect world, all casinos could unite and stick to proper baccarat dealing rules and procedures, and then the players would have to conform or stay home. Now, I know as well as anyone that these baccarat-loving players would never stay home, but I also know it's far from a perfect world.