



By Richard Marcus | Casino Table Game Protection Consultant/Trainer and
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THE ART OF A PROFESSIONAL BLACKJACK PASTPOST STEEPED IN PSYCHOLOGY

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I'm at a casino property conducting a Table Game Protection Seminar. It's 12:30 p.m. and the attendees are in the casino buffet eating lunch. All but one of them, that is. A table games shift manager named Brett is sitting on the third-base seat of the blackjack table in the training room. I am standing in the dealer's position behind the chip rack. We had never left. He's got three green \$25 chips in his betting circle. The rest of the spots on the layout are covered with an assortment of green-chip and black-chip bets, some with a mixture of both. My left hand is covering the mouth of the card shoe. Brett looks up at me.

"Are you ready?" I ask. We'd been practicing for half an hour. He had volunteered beforehand in private and let me know he was willing to do this bet-switch move on his colleagues when they returned from lunch.

"I think so," he says with evident self-doubt.

"Don't worry, Brett," I reassure him. "You will get it. We'll just go over it a few more times, then I'll let you get a bite to eat." I was hungry as hell myself. "There's no need to overkill this. The key is just to relax. Remember, speed is not important here. What is important is timing, just like with all top-shelf casino cheating moves...Okay, ready?"

"Deal," he says, and this time it's a command!

I deal out the cards to all six circles on the layout, a card to the players, a card to me, another card to the players, another card to me. Brett has a hard twenty; I have a six showing. I go through the first five imaginary players beginning at first base, playing their hands for them according to basic strategy. One player doubles down his

his hand, another splits his pair. I draw out the cards from the shoe and lay them on their hands. I arrive at Brett. He gives me the stand signal by waving his hand above his cards and verbalizes it as well. I turn over my hole card to reveal another six. I hit it with a king and bust out. I go into the rack and grab a stack of green to begin paying the table. I say to Brett, "Okay, don't rush it, it's just the timing."

I move my right hand holding the green stack toward Brett's winning bet. I cut into his three green chips as smoothly as any dealer would. I raise my stack and move toward the imaginary player to Brett's right. At that instant I feel my hand get whacked by Brett's hand.

"Hey!" he barks on me. "I bet two purple chips here and you paid me all in green! What is this crap?"

I am not startled only because I knew what he was going to do. After all, I had just taught him the move. Nevertheless, it was impressive. Except he whacked my hand a little too hard.

I look down at his bet. It is now \$1,025, two purple \$500 chips with one green \$25 chip on top. It lies perfectly straight in the exact position of the original bet that has disappeared. The only green chip I see is the one sitting in the betting circle atop the two purples. Behind his switched-in bet I see a stack of ten purple \$500 chips. I had not seen them up until now. That's because he had them hidden the whole time underneath his forearm while he played his hand. At that time, the only chips visible to me had been the three greens he'd originally bet, \$75. Those three chips were now safely buried in his crotch under the table. Normally, the cheat stuffs them in his jacket

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pocket, but I wanted to make the move as easy I could for him without the risk of fumbling the chips as he tried to pocket them.

"Okay, Brett," I say happily. "That was great! Just ease up on the touching of my hand. You don't have to whack me so hard." He apologizes, saying he just wanted to make sure he got my attention. I reassure him that he'd succeeded. "It's very important not to hit the dealer too hard, especially if it's a woman dealing. You don't want a dealer screaming or bitching at you. Any negative stuff like that, and you turn them against you and never get paid. Remember, it's just a soft touch to their hands. Like I explained to you before, that little touch is the equivalent of hitting them in the head with a baseball bat because of the shock factor. No player ever touches the dealer's hand while the dealer's smack in the middle of paying out. Never happens. That's why it's such as shock. When you make the claim to a woman dealer you want to be a bit apologetic. You can almost say, 'I'm sorry, you paid me wrong' to women."

At that instant, I realized how deep I was getting into it with him. It reminded me of the way-back-when days where I really was training cheat partners how to do this blackjack move for real money.

I paid off Brett's pastposted bet. "Okay, what do you do now?"

"I bet back." He tosses one of the purples I'd just paid him on the layout. "Change that for five blacks," he says. I call out the chip change as a dealer would do in the casino and give him the five blacks and lock up the purple in the rack.

"Okay, you bet back. Do you bet back two hundred or two hundred twenty-five?"

"Two hundred twenty-five."

"Why?"

"Because that's what you said."

We both laugh. Brett's been a good student. He knows perfectly well that the reason his bet-back is going to be two hundred twenty-five and not two hundred is not because the twenty-five-dollar difference makes a difference. It's because having that green chip atop the two blacks he's going to bet back corresponds to the green chip he had atop the two purple chips he'd switched in. This match creates the thought in casino personnel's minds that Brett is just a guy who has a quirk of putting a green chip on top of large-denomination chips. It's a pattern, a personal trait that plays on a pit supervisor's psyche, just another psychological element that contributes to the believability of the move as a legitimate bet.

"OK Brett," I say, "you're ready to go!"

"I have question. In real casinos, does this move have to be done at third base?"

"No. It can be done at any position as long as the dealer has another hand to pay after your hand. That's because if you're the last person the dealer pays, he's going back to the rack to dump off the remaining chips in his hand, right after he paid you. So if you do the move and then claim, reaching forward to touch his hand, that's dangerous because you're touching his hand as it's heading back to the rack. Dealers' natural instinct is to protect that rack, so your hand heading in its direction can be taken as an attempt to go into the rack and grab a stack chips."

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That actually happens in casinos. A guy goes on a bad losing streak, blows the rent and food money playing blackjack, and boom, he lunges forward, grabs a stack of black from the rack and hits the door. So that disqualifies first base as the dealer would never have anyone to pay after he pays the cheat. I just wanted Brett to do it from third base because it gives the best angle for the move.

Okay, now it's time for the big show. I make eye contact with Brett, and he makes his way to the third-base blackjack seat. I ask all the people currently seated to cede their places so more attendees can participate actively in the demonstration, which is just as true as our need for that third-base spot for Brett. I ask for volunteers to be the dealer. I am looking for a woman, which I hope will get Brett to not slap the dealer's hand so hard like he'd slapped mine while practicing. Several ladies volunteer and I choose Chantal, a floor supervisor whom I knew had lots of experience dealing blackjack.

Chantal takes her place behind the chip rack. I sit at first base across from Brett. The rest of the group packs in tight around the table. They see me sit down and think I'm going to do a cheat move they've never seen before. There is a sense of excitement in the room. "All right," I say as I put my four green chips in my betting circle. "Now you're going to see a very professional blackjack cheat move that goes against the very grain of what you've learned and experienced about blackjack cheat moves." I can confidently make that statement based upon what they shared with me about their experiences with blackjack cheating, which were a collection of low-level bet-caps and pinches done by amateurs and low-level professional cheats. Everyone else is betting green and black chips as I had stated the table minimum/maximum was \$25 to \$2,000.

I look across the table at Brett and see he's pretty nervous. I'm praying he doesn't screw it up. Doing so would make me look bad and it has happened. The reason he's doing the move and not me is because I cannot possibly do it undetected with forty pairs of eyes on my bet and my hands. I would have to be some kind of serious magician or illusionist to pull that off, but like I said before, magicians and sleight of hand have nothing to do with cheating.

So I give Brett a piercing look telling him not to screw it up. Then I tell everyone that we're going to take Chantal's up card as a five, regardless what she actually turns over, and that they all should play basic strategy. This is to prevent anyone from busting out their hand. Then I tell Chantal to bust her hand at the end, to keep taking cards until she goes over twenty-one, therefore she would have to pay the entire table.

Everyone understands and Chantal begins dealing. The players each receive their two cards. I can feel everyone's eyes on me. That's where I want them. The collective hand decisions play out rapidly as no one risks busting. There were two double-downs, and everyone else including Brett stood pat. Chantal turns over her hole card and makes it easy by really busting out on her first hit. She then grabs a stack of green as I look at Brett, who is definitely shitting bricks. Then suddenly I heard Brett saying gently, "Excuse me Chantal, you made a little mistake here." He touched her hand as well. He didn't verbalize that he was betting purples, just pointed at his pastposted bet which was two purples capped by a green. He had four back-up purples behind the bet that had been hidden underneath his forearm until now. Chantal was

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seeing those chips for the first time. His original \$75 bet of three greens had disappeared. Not into his crotch but rather into his jacket pocket. I was impressed that he took that extra step.

Brett had done it all perfectly! Chantal just nonchalantly apologized, took her \$75 payoff and put it back in the rack, then peeled off two purples and a green from the tubes in the rack and paid him. Not one other attendee at the table said anything. Neither did the attendees standing around the table. Neither did those watching on the big TV screen. It appeared not one person in the room besides Brett and me was aware a move had gone down. Everyone must have been so focused on me that no one could have ever imagined that their table games shift manager just did a monster blackjack bet-switch on his own dealer. It happened just the way I'd wanted. Pulling that off is game protection trainer mastery!

Chantal finished paying off the table and she dealt the next hand. Then the hand after that and the one after that. After the fourth hand, I instructed Chantal to stop dealing. And the next words I heard from Phillip, one of the guys who'd been sitting at the table and played each of the four rounds, including the one on which Brett did the move, made me aware I was doing a good job as a game protection trainer.

He said simply, "Richard, why are you stopping now? You never cheated. I was watching you intently the whole time." And several others nodded in agreement, wondering why I hadn't cheated. I smiled and let a few moments go by, "Then I ask, nobody saw it?"

"Saw what?" Phillip asked.

"The cheat move."

"What?" Phillip had a comically bemused expression on his face. "You did cheat?"

I loved milking the moment. "Nobody saw the move?" I looked around the room. Lots of shaking heads, shrugs and confused expressions. "No one saw any cheat move?" Same reactions. So I finally put them out of their misery. I looked across the table at Brett. I said, "Brett would you explain the cheat move to your colleagues, please?"

I could see that the group thought that Brett was the only one who had seen me cheat. It still had not occurred to one person that it was Brett who had cheated. Every person in the room was aware of the "mistake" Chantal had made paying Brett's bet on the first hand at the table. Yet no one associated it with cheating, in spite of the fact that we've been in a cheating class for five hours!

That, my friends, shows you the power of this stuff.

When Brett explained it to the group, they were astonished, and even more interested in the rest of the training seminar. I then explained how and why the move worked, pointing out all its components that created the dominant psychology that gets it paid. Beforehand, like most casino staffs unfamiliar with the move, they could not conceive of someone actually switching in a pastpost after the dealer had paid, claim a dealer mistake and then be paid on the much bigger bet. All their training, all their experience in blackjack chip manipulation moves, was centered around the cheats doing their moves before the dealer paid. This was a brand new facet of cheating for them,

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although it's been around for half a century...that I know of.

Finally, I ask the group how this move can be stopped?

Well, I would go on to explain that in depth, but here I will say that it's, **AGAIN**, all about properly casing a layout which is more than just looking at the bets.



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