

GAME PROTECTION SERVICES #4

A man in a light-colored jacket and blue jeans stands in the center of a circular frame. The frame is a roulette wheel with numbers 10, 5, 24, 10 visible. The background shows a casino interior with slot machines and a sign that says "ATLANTIC CITY".

THE ESSENTIALS OF CASINO TABLE GAMES PROTECTION. WHAT ALL CASINOS NEED TO KNOW

By Richard Marcus | Casino Table Game Protection Consultant/Trainer and Founder of the Global Game Protection and Table Games Conference

I have learned a heck of a lot about casino table games protection during both my twenty-five years' cheating casinos and my now almost twenty training them. I honestly can't say from which side I learned more, but I can tell you one very important thing I've learned from the training side is what a casino game protection training manual entails. In short, I have seen around two dozen of them. Why haven't I seen more? Because after having requested them from the first two dozen casinos I trained before arriving at the properties, I noticed they were all practically identical, whether they were for US, Canadian, European or Asian casinos. I then examined them thoroughly, looking for holes in them or things I might suggest to make them better. But I couldn't find much at all to add. Besides some really fine points from a cheater's perspective that could help game protection, the only significant point I might add is a universal augmentation of casing layouts.

What I'm saying here is that I have never seen a game protection manual that is not excellent. Not once. I am also willing to bet that each of you reading this began your casino career by reading some kind of game protection or casino industry manual. As dealers begin their careers, they're given a dealing procedures manual that also has lots of instruction for protecting their games. Same thing for surveillance manuals, theirs of course having many more topics than table games, electronic table games and slot machines.

So, what is the relationship between game protection manuals and cheating, at all levels? I have heard others before me say that casino cheating is nothing more than those doing it breaking down casinos' game protection procedures. In other words, forcing casino personnel to temporarily abandon their procedures, especially on the floor. This is totally correct. In theory AND practice, if casinos followed their game protection manuals one hundred percent of the time, cheating would practically be wiped out.

Sounds simple, right? But it's about as difficult as getting a one hundred percent bipartisan concurrence on any US Government issue. If it were not, instead of making you suffer through an eight-hour game protection training seminar, I could walk into the training room, say good morning to you, then say, "Okay, you wanna go home; I wanna go home. If you follow your game protection manual one hundred percent of the time without exception, I'll see you later!"

But it doesn't work that way, does it? And we cannot expect casino operations directors to send down a memo that all table games and surveillance employees must read their game protection manuals three times a week to remind themselves. And I guess I'm lucky that this is not a reality or I'd probably be out of a job a lot longer than I was in lockdown during the height of the Covid pandemic.

So, what are the methods professional cheats use to get floor staff to break away from policy and procedure? Well, I already gave you a perfect example of that with our professional roulette-cheat team in a recent article. Virtually all casinos have the game protection policy of floor supervisors calling surveillance for verification of dubious large winning bets. Simply stated, any time an unseen high-denomination winning chip shows up on any layout, not just roulette, surveillance must be called. Imagine the devastating effect that would have on pastposting if that integral tenet of game protection were followed religiously. It might just put pastposting cheats out of business. But skilled cheats know how to make that impossible. That massive psychological set-up routine we saw in class is too strong for you to go running to your

procedures and policies. It all happened so fast and these cheats prey upon your humanity. All humans, good and evil, are affected by what they see and hear around them. Casino floor people are no different.

If there is one thing that might be reinforced in game protection manuals, it could be a longwinded reminder that game protection is LESS about surveillance and MORE about table games people on the floor, mainly dealers and supervisors. If I were writing a new game protection manual, I would include this sentence:

Supervisors on the floor should completely forget surveillance exists until the moment when they see something suspicious or are told by a dealer about something suspicious, at which time they should remember that there is surveillance and they should call them.

This means that if floor people can forget about surveillance while performing the normal functions of the job, they will be innately more productive in the recognition of cheating events happening on their shifts.

If we look at this in a cognitive sense, we see the value in it all. Ask yourself this question: Besides amateur or low-level professional repetitive cheat moves such as repetitive bet-capping and pinching (reducing or removing losing or probable losing bets), what percentage of significant cheat moves does surveillance by itself catch in real time? That's to say an operator is on the monitor and not only sees the move go down but recognizes it is a move. This is not a facetious question. Talented cheats can do a move so swift and slick that even an experienced surveillance operator seeing it in real time might not recognize it, especially if he's not entirely focused and concentrating on what he's watching.

Remember this: the better and more skilled a professional casino team is, the less amount of time they will actually spend on the tables. I often liken top casino cheats to surfers. If you've ever surfed or seen surfing on TV and movies, you may have noticed that surfers in general spend very little time actually riding the waves. Perhaps five percent of the time would be a good guess. Same thing with professional casino cheats. They spend a low percentage of the time at the tables. They spend much more time patrolling casinos in search of tables to work, getting the chips they need to do the moves, breaking down high-denomination chips to avoid going to the cashier with them and then finally cashing out, which for high-level casino cheats is an operation in itself as they have to avoid both casino heat and money-laundering heat.

So with all this to consider, how often will surveillance on its own, without notification from the pits, randomly pick up on a major one-shot casino cheating move? Well, I cannot answer that question directly as I don't have the empirical evidence to do so, but I can tell you that in my twenty-five years of professional casino cheating during which I was involved in thousands of moves, never once, not one time, did a casino surveillance department anywhere in the world catch one my teams' moves in real time. Some of you will think that this could be because of the lack of 24/7 video coverage on all table games, but note that I retired from casino cheating on the last day of 1999, or maybe it was already the first day of 2000, and by that time more casinos had the 24/7 coverage on all the games than not.

The summation here is simple: Table games floor personnel are the first line of defense against all forms of cheating and advantage play. Casinos should operate game protection from the floor up to the sky, not from the sky down to the floor.

With that in mind, we come to another very important question. That is how game protection training should be done. I have received many questions about that subject. I have also heard other people's opinions about it. One of the central questions or issues that arise is whether multiple departments of a casino should be trained together, mainly Table Games and Surveillance. Those in favor of training these two crucial departments together stress the importance of both being on "the same page." They say that Table Games and Surveillance being trained together and learning the same facets of game protection together can only help the overall game protection performance of both departments.

Those who favor separate training of the two departments basically address it with only one concern, albeit that concern is quite important. It is that if Table Games has the same training as Surveillance, people on the casino floor, they will know exactly what game protection knowledge the surveillance department has, which could make both the temptation and development of inside scams by dealers and supervisors easier. This worry is common among a large percentage of upper casino managers. The fear that floor people being shown all the cheat moves that surveillance personnel are shown would result in more inside dealer/floor person/surveillance scams against the casino is real. And it could as well facilitate collusion between the floor and surveillance departments against the casino. Many casinos not only disallow the two departments being trained together, they also forbid any in-person interaction between members of the different departments. Yes, that means what it says. That people from the floor

must not even know who the people in the surveillance department are. The vice-versa here doesn't apply because surveillance obviously knows who the floor personnel are as they spend many hours watching them on the monitors.

My opinion on the subject is clear.

I have always preferred conducting my game protection training with the two groups together. I feel strongly about this because I believe the casino staff on the floor must be on the same page as the surveillance staff "upstairs."

True, there are potential negatives, even dangers. But let's look at a few facts first.

The first is that collusion scams performed by casino floor staff very rarely involve surveillance people. So by that alone, you can rid yourselves of the worry of a major scam going down in your casino from the bottom all the way up. That can only happen in a casino that has disastrously poor internal controls and game-protection policy, and a complete lack of adherence if there is any game-protection policy in place.

Second: There are always some dealers who turn to cheating the house. This can NEVER be avoided. But the global percentage, even in casinos with poor internal controls that are literally begging their dealers to cheat them, is extremely low, probably lower than the employee-stealing that goes on in the vast majority of worldwide industries.

With that in mind, excluding dealers and floor supervisors from knowledge of the inner-workings of table scams being taught to surveillance staff will have a negative impact on your casinos. Why? Simply because your dealers are your first line of defense against ALL casino scams not involving dealers. If they are ignorant to a particular cheating scam happening on their tables, Surveillance immediately becomes your FIRST line of defense, and unless you have very sharp supervisors behind the dealers who take notice of the moves going down, your casino might be up Shit's Creek if your theory is that Surveillance will catch a lot of important cheating by watching their monitors.

Now, I have absolutely no bias against surveillance staff, but, like I said before and must repeat, in my twenty-five-year casino-cheating career, not once has a cheat-move of mine been spotted in time and stopped by surveillance alerting the gaming pits.

I mean NOT ONCE!

This is not to say that surveillance operators aren't efficient. By and large they do a great job, especially if they have good training and follow internal policy. But it is much too difficult to spot the majority of professional moves when you're away from the table--no matter how good your equipment is. And add to that, in current-day casinos, Surveillance is more and more engaged in other areas and departments of the casino property, including asset and people protection, and even marketing.

So, remember again that good game protection must come from the floor up. Surveillance serves best when the floor staff alerts them to something suspicious. Then they can focus on whatever it is going down on the tables, and then mobilize the entire casino to eradicate the problem.

With all that said, it is firmly my opinion that you should train your floor staff in game protection, cheating and advantage play as you do your surveillance staff. However, I do suggest that if dealers are participating in game protection training, they should not be present when inside-dealer scams are being presented. They can learn these when and if they become supervisors.

In my next article in this 20-article Table Games Protection series, I will discuss what happens in casinos when there is not sufficient communication between Table Games and Surveillance departments, and also take a look at the importance of solid communication between Surveillance departments at different properties at a national and international level.

Stay tuned!

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