



*\$20 Million
Phil Ivey
Baccarat Scandal*

**BACCARAT GAME
PROTECTION.
WHAT CAN
YOU DO?**

Baccarat Game Protection. What can you do?

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

The image is just to get your attention! Ivey's and Sun Kelly's baccarat scam is a great part of cheating history but it is history. This segment of my baccarat game protection class is not going to tell you how to protect against Edge-Sorting at baccarat. I believe the vast majority of you in Table Games and Surveillance already know how to do that.

What I am going to talk about here is nuts and bolts baccarat game protection. How to stay safe against the most dreaded table game cheating threat in the industry. And it has many heads.

So let's get started.

The most important element of baccarat game protection, as some of you may have learned the hard way, is protecting the game against yourselves. By that I don't mean you personally. I mean all your employees who have access to touching the cards you use in baccarat. Each of your casinos has a procedure that governs all actions taken with the baccarat cards once they arrive at the property. Some of you have a procedure governing actions taken with the baccarat cards even before they arrive at your casino. In either or both cases, if your baccarat-cards protection procedures are good, go all out to make sure they're followed to the letter. If they're not good, get new ones!

The absolute most important thing to have in your baccarat-cards protection manual is that from the second the cards arrive at your property, a minimum of two casino employees must be physically present to greet them and a third set of eyes must be present as well, although not physically. The third person is of course surveillance. Two employees and surveillance must accompany the

baccarat cards every time they are touched, transported and whatever else you do with them. This is an absolute must! Besides card-switch scams and some cutter scams, all major million-dollar-plus baccarat scams are done by employees who have access to the baccarat games, mainly dealers, supervisors and sometimes even surveillance itself. Having two or more people plus surveillance follow the cards everywhere greatly reduces the chances of your casino getting hit with a big employee-engineered scam but does not eradicate the possibility of it.

By following the cards, I mean everywhere. From the loading dock, to the checkpoints, to inventory, to pre-arrival on the casino floor and VIP rooms, to the final shuffle, if there is one, right up to the loading of the baccarat cards into whatever device you use to deal them.

Another extremely important safeguard is if your baccarat cards arrive pre-shuffled, do not shuffle them again. Many casinos for some reason re-shuffle pre-shuffled cards. Doing that is about as awkward as writing "re-shuffle pre-shuffled cards," which sounds strange enough! Just no need to do it. If you have to shuffle the cards, that's fine. In that case, don't order pre-shuffled cards. If you do order pre-shuffled cards, just verify that they are indeed shuffled with two employees and surveillance present. A casino or two or three have been burned by loading what they thought were pre-shuffled cards into baccarat shoes. And this was worsened by the fact that the astute players caught on to it many hands before the baccarat dealers and supervisors.

One other thing about pre-shuffled cards. They don't completely protect you from

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the dealer, who can peek at back cards of the pack as he does the cut procedure, which he can hide from the camera above. He then either manually memorizes a set of a few hands worth of cards or a device on his body/clothing records it. Then the sequence gets cut where it either comes off the top of the new shoe or gets identified by key cards. Just two or three known outcomes like this can take your baccarat game for big money, given the high limits and the possibility that a cheat team can occupy each seat at the game.

Also, if your casino uses manual shuffles in baccarat, beware of unconventional false shuffles of slugs. The tell of dealers doing this is when they perform high riffles that are clearly not according to procedure and somewhat sloppy looking. What they're accomplishing by that high riffle is that it lets them peak at cards they're shuffling much easier, and then they can put in a fix with a variety of false-shuffle moves such as the step-ladder shuffle where they peak and pick one card during each riffle and group those cards at the top of a pack to form a mini-slug, which can then be identified by the dealer's agents and exploited to the table maximum bet.

You shouldn't be using manual shuffles in baccarat unless for some reason you are forced to.

After covering the cards-protection segment, I discuss the major baccarat scams, but spend a lot less time on them than you might think. This because everyone already knows them and there haven't really been any new ones in the last decade or so. We discuss the false shuffle scams, the cutter scams—with or without dealer help—the hacking scams like the huge one that occurred at the Crown casino in Australia some years

back, and other variations of similar scams. I do know a thing or two about employee-driven baccarat scams as I may have been first baccarat dealer to actually do the false shuffle scam, which I did in 1977 in Las Vegas, documented in my book *American Roulette*, which was published long before the Tran Organization and other infamous false shuffle scams came to light.

The key ingredient to all these scams is that baccarat, unlike blackjack and other casino card games, has the unique characteristic that card draws are made in adherence to certain set rules while the players have no decisions to make such as hit and stand at blackjack. This simply means that any control taken over the shuffle process can lead to cheats having knowledge of the outcome of every hand in an entire upcoming shoe, which as we have seen a hundred times, is extremely devastating to casinos.

Another important less known baccarat cheating scam is related to the blackjack bet-switch scam where the cheat claims the dealer made a mistake after he's paid, having switched in large-denomination chips for much smaller-denomination chips. The move is even more dangerous at baccarat tables because it can be repeated and set-up beforehand. The psychological weapon in it, as you will see, is that the cheat puts the dealer in a comfort zone, that being the dealer is comfortable with the cheat.

Picture this scenario: A man appearing to be a high roller comes into your baccarat room. He's well dressed, sports expensive jewelry and carries himself as someone with money to burn. He sits down, removes a fistful of high-value chips mixed in with lower-denomination chips. In some cases, he may even sign a

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marker, which means you already know him. In one Las Vegas casino, the scam you're about to see was pulled off by a gambler with a large credit line who was well known to several Strip casinos. He would sign markers at the baccarat table and use the chips he signed for to do the scam.

The man in our baccarat pit right now lays his multi-colored chips on the table. There are yellows, purples, blacks, greens and reds. They are not neatly stacked but rather spilled in a sloppy pile. He makes a first bet of \$2,025 on Player, two \$1,000 chips with one \$25 chip on top. He may or may not have accomplices at the table who offset his bets by betting the equivalent on Bank. He wins or loses the hand. For the next hand he scoops chips from his heap and bets them on Player. This time the bet is \$675, a purple, a black and three green chips. He wins or loses the bet. The next hand he bets \$1,150, a yellow, a black and two green chips. He wins or loses the bet. The next hand he bets only three green chips, \$75.

Now he's ready to sting you. He bets the three green chips again and wins, but after the dealer pays he does the switch. He removes the three greens and replaces them with two yellow \$1,000 chips with a green chip on top, \$2,025. It's the same exact bet he'd made on his first hand at the table. He taps the dealer's hand and claims the dealer made a mistake, paid him \$75 when he should have paid him \$2,025.

The shock factor is much less here because the dealer had been in a comfort zone with the cheat. He's already seen the man bet the exact same amount he's now claiming to have bet. He's already seen a series of haphazard bets ranging the gamut, but each one with a green chip on top. Add

to that, the cheat's multi-colored and multi-denomination chips are scattered in front of him on the layout. All this relaxes the dealer into believing that he simply missed the two yellow chips this time but has seen them in the betting circle twice before. And to boot, he doesn't even have to alert the supervisor about the \$1,000 chips because the supervisor's already aware. So rather than tell the supervisor about his "mistake," he just lets it go and pays the cheat.

This move is very effective because of the built-in set up. The cheat can do it twice or even three times on the same dealer, depending on the level of the comfort zone attained. A Las Vegas surveillance director told me at my open game protection training seminar there in 2018 that he had caught a known high roller in his casino doing this exact move, and when they reviewed the action on their baccarat games going back to the point where the man entered the casino, they found he successfully did the move six times! I don't remember how his surveillance department finally caught on to him. Probably a case of going to the well one time too many.

The lesson to be learned here is that there should never be a comfort zone with any players no matter how well you think you know them. Trusted high rollers have a lot of natural protection in your casinos when they take advantage of the fact you already know them as high rollers. That same protection is often afforded to money launderers in casinos whose employees don't comply with gaming statutes legislated for reporting suspicious activity connected to money laundering.

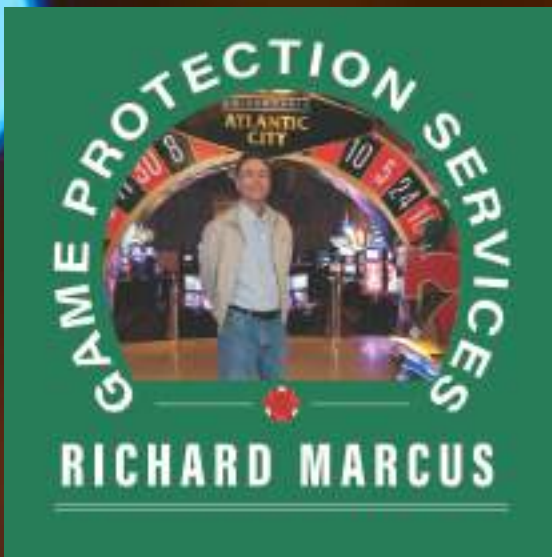
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A final lesson is this: Use a smart shoe in your baccarat games. It can protect you against a whole bunch of scams and errors committed by the dealers which can be taken advantage of by cheats who develop highly effective scams off dealer mistakes.

Have you ever heard of the "Asian Baccarat Scam?" It was based on dealer mistakes and cost casinos that did not have smart shoes in use countless millions.



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