



Hippodrome, Here We Come

Richard Marcus' Global Table Games & Game Protection conference arrives in London again. By *Peter White*

S

o another successful Global Table Games & Game Protection conference in Las Vegas has been completed.

What's next?

Well, that decision was bouncing around my head for a while. Since my conference has the word "Global" in its official name, it is time to truly make it global. All three GTGC/GGPC events took place in Las Vegas, so my next offering was going to be in Asia or Europe, and it was a difficult decision. I had to base it on the strength of my contacts, as well as my consulting work and conference history in those two regions. I have done a handful of seminars in Europe, including two in London, but just one multi-casino seminar in Manila. I have also done consulting work for one major UK casino company and a handful of casinos on the

continent, but never for an individual casino company in Asia. As well, I have many more valuable contacts in Europe than I do in Asia, and that includes you, Peter White.

Why the Hippodrome?

Three words: "Hip" and "Simon Thomas." By that, I mean the Hippodrome is by far the hippest casino in Europe and Simon Thomas is the best gaming industry CEO I have ever had the pleasure of knowing. I love telling the story of how I met him. I was giving a UK multi-casino seminar at the Victoria Casino in London, another great venue, and we were getting ready to break for lunch. So I began mucking chips off the roulette table and stacking them into chip racks, as we had finished with roulette.



Well, a dapper-looking gentleman came over and began helping me clean off the table. We chatted a bit about the seminar. Then we finished and I thanked him for his help, and he walked off. At that moment, another attendee whom I'd known from a previous event came up to me and asked, "Do you know who that guy is?", pointing to the man who had just helped me clean up. I said no, and he said it was Simon Thomas. I said awkwardly, "Who's Simon Thomas?" He looked at me just as awkwardly and said, "You're doing a casino seminar in London and you don't know who Simon Thomas is?" I shrugged and he said, "Google him." I did and my first thought after reading about Simon was, "I can't believe he was actually helping me clean off a roulette layout." Simon Thomas is a multi-industry mogul but he relates just like a regular guy.

Then I had the audacity to e-mail him six months later to ask if I could do my second London gig at his Hippodrome casino. He said, "Bring it on" and I did. Both London gigs went off great but that Hippodrome one was something special. A multi-themed casino with several levels, including one that contains a replica of a 1920s New York barbershop, the Hippodrome is as cool as it gets. I can say that I felt a unique vibe running through the entire place and I've

been in perhaps a thousand casinos in my lifetime. So once I settled on Europe for my next event destination, choosing the Hippodrome was a no-brainer.

Will this event have a similar schedule to the Las Vegas conference?

It will but it will not be a carbon copy. Again, the European edition of the GTGC/GGPC will cater to the table games and game/asset-protection sectors, but the program will include sessions on compliance, IT, marketing and customer service. During the next few months, I will be researching the particulars of the UK and European gaming industries and reaching out to my contacts for suggestions on how to balance out the presenter roster, and program to be the most effective for the European and UK markets. I will not disappoint. My Vegas conference has always received nothing but high praise for the quality of my presenters and program.

What were the most memorable takeaway experiences for this year's Global Table Games & Game Protection conference?

Probably the realization that a lot of new and important stuff hits the fan each year, which makes this and other conferences stay interesting. A few



years back, it was the invasion of stadium gaming and then electronic table games during the pandemic. The last two years, it has definitely been the talk of cyber attacks on major casino companies in the U.S., some of which were propelled through the social engineering of employees who work where the money is. Even if there have not been such similar attacks on European casinos, the industry on this side of the pond needs to be aware and on the defensive.

After the inaugural GTGC/GGPC in 2022 I found myself thinking, “How am I gonna put together another program as new, diverse and interesting as I just did?” Then, “How am I gonna put together a presenter roster that can live up to or maybe even rise above the one from that first year?” I managed to do just that. It wasn’t easy. It takes hard work and dedication, and then of course persistence. The key is to keep abreast of all the happenings in the casino world and sort out not only the most important developments in it but primarily those that are the most relevant to the sectors of the industry you want to draw to your event.

You spend a lot of your time talking with casino management. How does that insight and understanding of both the optimism of new challenges and at times potential concerns feed through to your conference programs?

Much of what the final program contains comes from pieces supplied by casino directors from various

departments. Through that very channel, I learned how important it was to not only include marketing and player development in the program but to demonstrate how these departments directly relate to both table games and surveillance operations. Player development fuels the casino action by getting the right players at your tables while surveillance can play a key role in determining which of those right players may ultimately be the wrong players, evinced by high-rolling individuals or groups who are playing with an advantage or even within an organized cheating ring. That danger is very high at baccarat tables.

From casino-management executives, you also get a wide scope of takes on high-tech gaming analytics and protection technologies, including machine learning, facial recognition, and artificial intelligence. We have been covering these technologies since the inception of the conference, and there are new and important updates each year as the technologies expand exponentially. In some sessions, upper management’s concerns are often assuaged when they get better views, and explanations from very informed and engaging presenters. I have seen this transformation with casino directors and managers coming to the conference very worried about the dangers of FR and AI but then leaving it with boosted confidence in their value, and less feeling of uncertainty about their security features, and threats to their human workforce.



What are the options and opportunities that you are providing for sponsors and exhibitors?

As always, I look for sponsors and exhibitors who can bring the most to the conference in terms of their products and their names. As my conference is unique, perhaps the only one in the world with a direct focus on both the table games and surveillance/compliance sectors, I provide exhibitors the opportunity to display their products, which range from standard new table games to the most sophisticated electronic, digital gaming, and slot machines. At the Las Vegas event each year, I hold a competition amongst new game developers called “The Best New Table Games Contest,” where the attendees vote for the best new game, and the winners receive automatic installs and field trials from casinos sponsoring the competition. The main sponsor for the 2023 and 2024 events was Interblock Gaming, the leading producer of luxury electronic games in the worldwide industry. Also on board as sponsors were the surveillance and video technology companies Genetec, and ConnectionsIT, and Bulletproof, a GLI company that provides industry solutions in the areas of IT, security and compliance.

What would you like to say to casino managers in Europe as to why the Hippodrome London Table Games & Protection Conference is a must-attend event?

Saying a “must-attend” event is kind of clichéd, so I won’t say it. But what I will say is that my event is the absolute best in the world catering to the table games, surveillance and compliance sectors. As well, it is becoming a force in customer service and marketing. Feedback has been terrific all three years. I have never seen one single negative comment published about the GTGC/GGPC and I expect the same for the debut European event.

You have been hosting training seminars and conferences for many years all around the world. They take a lot of organizing and planning. What is your prime motivation that has led to your popularity and success with these events?

That is simply to bring the best product to the table and be as original as possible. Nowadays there are just SO many conferences throughout the gaming industry. To be successful with all the competition — as many conferences are similar in nature and overlap one another, —you have to deliver something different. For starters, I am quite the “different” person who’s thrown his hat into the gaming conference ring, given my history. Having been arguably the world’s most effective professional casino cheat for a quarter century, I have really turned the tables ... not on the casino industry but for the casino industry. I bring a new perspective to table games protection and surveillance.

Many game-protection experts credit me as having driven the biggest change in the evolution of surveillance during the last half century, that being the mass transition to 24-hour video coverage of entire casino floors, including all table games and slot machines. As well, I have changed the way casinos train their staff in game protection. I am proud of having done that, and I am motivated to teach casino professionals how to improve their table games and surveillance operations by bringing in the best experts in all the industry fields that are part of my event.

This year saw another edition of the Best New Tables Game Contest at the Global Table Games & Game Protection Conference. What was the standard like of entrants and what were the key aspects of the winning 'Knockout 52' that made it a so?

We have had high standards for entry to the Best New Table Games Contest since its inception in 2022. The games must be original and show some definite new facet, be it in the form of rules changes to an existing game or a completely new game, the likes of which have never been seen before. The addition of creative side bets to an existing game also qualifies for the contest as long as they stimulate added interest to the existing game. It should be noted that most entries to the contest are a series of side bets, sometimes in conjunction with minor rule changes to the existing game. We also require that the table games entered are true table games, and not mechanical functions to aid and abet an existing table game.

The key aspect of the winning game Knockout 52 was simply that it made history. It was the first time in table game history that a non-variant new casino game has won the Best New Table Games Contest. Since the inception of the contest at the Cutting Edge Table Games Conference in 2016, continued by the GTGC/GGPC in 2022, no game not based on poker, blackjack, craps, roulette or baccarat has ever won this competition. This is exciting news, and I think this new concept will spread through casinos like wildfire and help grow the entire casino table games industry. It is also an easy game to play and deal that affords a lot of excitement as players will be sure to cheer, and root as they follow the game in action. On the casino side, the game will give tables up to 60 rounds an hour, which of course means more money coming into the casino coffers at a quicker pace.



What was your opinion, and your attendees' opinions, of your 2024 conference venue, the Sahara Las Vegas Resort & Casino?

The main sessions of the program were held in the Sahara's main entertainment theater, which gave the conference a beautiful ambiance bathed in blue and violet lighting. All attendees and exhibitors alike were quite impressed by that. I could not have been happier by how the stage and big screen looked. Another plus for most people is the location of the Sahara, as it sits on the north end of the Las Vegas Strip, a distance away from the hustle and bustle, and huge traffic jams found at the center and south end of the Strip.

And finally, what would you like to say to casino operators in mainland Europe as to why this November 18-20, the Hippodrome Casino in London is the place to be?

Just this: My GTGC/GGPC event is the best combination table games/game protection/compliance event in the world, proven by three successive and successful years in Las Vegas, and the best is yet to come this November at the London Hippodrome.

Nov 18-20
2024

Global Table Games
and Game Protection
Conference - *Europe* -

*“A Brand New Casino
Operations Learning
Experience comes to Europe”*

- *Richard Marcus* -
Founder GTGC/GGPC



THE
HIPPODROME
CASINO
LONDON

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