

How I Did It and Got Away With It

Principles and Stories from Cheating at the Blackjack Table

My adventure began in 1985.

It is swing shift in one of the many iconic Las Vegas casinos that thrived in 1985. They are just memories now, imploded for the next generation of casinos run by the corporations.



A disheveled old man slowly approached the blackjack table. You know the look: desperation etched deep, hope hanging by a thread... and beneath it all, the quiet certainty of a man already losing, and a hint of the inevitable. He does not sit down. He does not call for the cocktail waitress. That is a tell, and not a good tell. He reaches into

his pocket and pulls out a stack of \$100 bills and starts counting them, 20 of them, a total of \$2,000.

And in a weak voice announces, "*Money plays.*" This was not about the money. It never is. It is always about something much deeper. One shot... just to see how his story ends. I have seen this dozens of times, and maybe you have too. The casino excitedly takes the old man's money and impatiently waits for the next prey. This is wrong and this is the moment everything changed for me. The willingness to avenged became too strong, even if it meant breaking the law.

The dealer shuffles the cards, offers the cut. The old man cuts the deck with an unstable hand. The dealer deals two cards to the old man.

The old man picks up the cards, looks at them through an old pair of glasses, and places them face up on the table. A five and a six. Total of 11. The perfect double-down hand. He has been here before. Maybe, just maybe, Lady Luck will be there for him tonight.

The old man reaches back into his pocket, pulls out that stack of \$100 bills, which is much smaller now. He counts out another 20. He has nothing more to lose. His bet: \$4,000. A bet he cannot afford to lose.

The dealer gives the old man his double-down card. The old man fumbles to pick it up. Looks at it. The life drains from his face, his hand shakes, and he accidentally drops the card face up onto the table. It is a four. The old man has a total of 15; no way to sugarcoat this; it is a loser. And to make matters worse, the dealer has the King of Hearts, the suicide king face up. Telling.

The dealer turns over his hole card, and it is a five. At last, there is hope. Maybe the old man leaves a winner, at least until next time. The dealer hits his hand with a 10 and busts. Yes! The old man just won \$2,000 in less than 60 seconds.

Now I know what some of you are thinking. Shouldn't that be \$4,000 the old man won? And you would be correct if, if the play was on the square. But this play was pretty damn far from being on the square.

My dear reader, you have just been played in the same manner I played the casino! Do not be miffed; it is not personal.

That unaccounted two thousand dollars you are thinking about goes into the pocket of the old man's partner who was the dealer.

I know this because I was that dealer back in 1985. This is one of hundreds of plays I was down with. It is called Double Down from a New Deck. I created this masterpiece of deception.

It is the perfect example of a code that all good card cheats live by. And that code is: there is no perfect move, only a perfect time to do a move. This play is a master class in psychological manipulation.

My name is Dustin Marks, but you already know that. This is my story and the lessons I learned from taking off the Las Vegas casinos back in the 80's. Enjoy!