

Review of Beyond Counting

Title:

Beyond Counting

Author:

James Grosjean

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There are several well known ways a player can gamble in a casino with a positive expectation. Certainly, Blackjack card counting, skilled Poker play, some full pay Video Poker, and sports betting are the most familiar. Others may know about more esoteric methods like Blackjack shuffle tracking, Roulette wheel clocking, and advantageous slot play. There are even those who go further, looking for house mistakes in calculating payoffs in games like Keno or Sic Bo. In *Beyond Counting*, James Grosjean pursues this topic further than anyone I have yet encountered, looking for edges in such strongly negative expectation games as the Big Six Wheel and Three Card Poker, as well as classical games like Blackjack and Craps.

After various introductions to the author and the book, we told about the strange hierarchy of casino advantage players. Grosjean tells us how the Blackjack basic strategy player won't understand what a card counter is doing, how a card counter won't see how a shuffle tracker is playing an advantage, and a shuffle tracker won't understand many of the actions of a hole card player. We come to understand the casino as a series of layers of potentially strange behavior. Who is doing what, and why?

Grosjean then performs some interesting mathematical analysis surrounding card counting. Some of his exercises aren't likely to be directly useful to the advantage player, but many of them are. His information will be at least somewhat useful to the non-mathematical readers, but those that are not math-adverse will get much more from *Beyond Counting* than those who are. The math is well explained, so that these examples, even when they are used to calculate something that may not be important, are good patterns for the reader to follow when they want to perform their own calculations.

Grosjean analyzes the math of partner play, discusses casino dealers, cheaters, and spotters. Some of this has been written on before, but much was new to me, at least. Grosjean goes into depth on some of these topics in a way that I believe is new to the literature. Some of it sounds a bit fantastic to me, and I don't know how often these situations come up, but maybe I just haven't been looking hard enough.

In addition to some general traveling tips, Grosjean covers advantage play at other games, such as Caribbean Stud Poker, Craps, Let It Ride, and others. His information on Craps I've heard before, but he provides major information about Three Card Poker and the Big Six Wheel that is, in my opinion, ground breaking. The Three Card Poker information, like much of what Grosjean covers, requires the ability to read the dealer's next card before it comes off the deck. Unfortunately, the author doesn't provide us with a lot of information on how to become skilled at this task, but it may be that this would be information difficult to impart through the printed word. The book concludes with some parting thoughts by the author, a glossary, and some additional charts and tables.

Purely on a price-to-words ratio, the reader comes out quite nicely on this exchange. Since *Beyond Counting* is printed in an 8 1/2" by 11" format with 10 pt. type, there are more than

double the number of words per page than one gets with many gambling book formats. The ideas are generally new and clearly imparted by the author, the math is reasonably well explained. I believe this is one of the most intriguing gambling books I've seen in a while. Those readers looking for new ideas in advantage gambling should look here, especially if they're not afraid of a little math.

Capsule:

Beyond Counting contains some of the most intriguing new ideas in advantage gambling I've seen in a while. This is a good place to learn about areas which may be fertile ground for advantage play, and for a good set of examples on how to apply mathematical methods in order to gain an edge at many games. Those who are looking for an easy route to gain an edge, and those who are deathly afraid of math may want to skip this book, but anyone who is willing to work a bit will find something of value here. This is not an introductory book.

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