

Blackjack Australia

SPECIAL REPORT NO. 2

Continuous Shuffling Machines: Friend or Foe?

The most topical issue amongst blackjack players at the moment is the Continuous Shuffling Machines (CSM's) which have been implemented at selected tables at Burswood and Crown, in an attempt to deter card counting. These machines are not to be confused with the shuffling machines that are used at the end of the shoe, which have been in use for some time and are of no consequence to card counters. The CSM typically holds 4 decks of cards and, as the name suggests, continuously shuffle the cards during play. This results in the cards from one round of play being placed back into the machine to be used in subsequent rounds. To understand why these CSM's affect card counters, you need to have an understanding of the theory of card counting.

The theory of card counting

When blackjack is played using traditional shuffling methods, once a card has been played it is discarded and will not appear again in the same shoe. For example, when an ace is played, it means that there is one less ace in the cards to be played in future hands. The probability of getting an ace in the next hand has now changed. Tracking these changing probabilities and altering playing and betting strategies accordingly is the basic theory behind card counting.

How do CSM's change this?

By now it should be quite clear that if cards that have already been in play have a chance of appearing in subsequent hands, card counting as we know it is useless. Or is it?

The future of card counting

As a card counter, I am not too concerned about the introduction of these machines. I am confident that the casinos will find out from these trials that they make less profit on tables with the new machines than on tables with existing shuffling methods, and will decide not to implement them on the remaining tables. They will make less profit because they will reduce their house edge by using 4 decks instead of the usual 8. In addition, these machines are less popular with the players because the cards can't be seen and many don't trust that the cards are distributed fairly. Despite all this, even if the use of the CSM does become widespread, there *is* a card counting method to beat them. Check back to the Blackjack Australia website soon to find out how.

Online casino warning

It is difficult to win money in the long term at online casinos because you can't get an advantage from card counting. If you are still going to gamble online however, at least use a reputable, audited casino that provide generous 'free chip' offers that can be exploited by the diligent player. You can find a list of these casinos on the Blackjack Australia website (www.blackjack.iinet.net.au).

Contact William Swaffer at webmaster@blackjack.iinet.net.au for more information.

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