

## Re: OT: A funny thing happend to me at an Indian casino . . .

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These machines are not the same type of video poker machines found in Vegas and other casinos (class III devices). They are class II gaming devices and do not have their own random number generators. In order to legally operate slot machines or "video poker" in an Indian casino in Florida, all machines have to be hooked up to a bingo-based single random number generator, where all players are competing against themselves. Therefore, you and your wife must have hit deal at exactly the same time. What happened to you proves that the slot machines are in compliance with class II gaming requirements of a single random number generator. These are not real video poker machines—they only simulate poker hands. They are glorified bingo machines with more bells and whistles.

Sean wrote:

This is not an LV story, but since it happened at a Hard Rock Hotel & Casino, I thought y'all might be interested. If not, stop reading.

BACKGROUND (you can skip this part)

My wife and I were recently in Tampa, Florida. Since they boast a large poker room, I thought, "hey, let's go make us some money to pay for this trip. Or at least let's go visit a new casino."

So there we were, at the "Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino," which is in some way co-owned by the Hard Rock folks and the the Seminoles. From the outside: a nice-sized hotel, adequate parking, and reasonable walkways to get you between your vehicle and the property. From the inside: mostly one big box, filled with slot machines. The box itself was attractive, and its overall impression would fit in any non-themed upscale casino on the strip.

The slot machine guests were primarily on the gray-haired side of life, but with maybe one third twenty-somethings, since there's not that much else to do as exciting as a casino in Tampa.

At the front of the hotel/casino, there was a pleasant looking bar with an excellent female jazz/blues singer performing for a mostly unappreciative crowd. I could have happily spent some time here, except that we didn't see it until we were on our way out. More on that below.

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But on entry, the card room was our target, and after quickly scoping out the rest of the casino, we went there. I was shocked to see that this was a SMOKING card room, and every table I could see had multiple players building cigarette campfires before them. (I shouldn't be shocked, since most Indian card rooms I've visited still allow smoking, but the Hard Rock insignia and the attractive appearance of the rest of this establishment had made me think it was with the times.) We did not stay and play.

So, what else to do? One of our favorite pastimes in casinos is video poker. Although we hadn't seen any VP thus far, we trekked onward. After circumnavigating the casino, we determined that there were only about eight VP machines among the several thousand slot machines. They were all gathered together, and had 50-cent minimum bets. Two of them were out of order. But, having driven here, and walked around, and seeing that two juxtaposed machines were free, and — well, this is a casino, and we like casinos, after all — we decided to play a little bit.

Now, I need to tell you about how my wife and I play. Sometimes we do it like you see everyone doing it, all by their own little selves in their own little worlds, dropping money as quickly as they can press the buttons. But usually, when it's only the two of us, we play in tandem: we push the Deal button at about the same time, and check out our hands. We'll hold the cards we want, then compare the strength of what we have against each other: higher hand draws first, weaker hand draws second. All the while we're talking about our hands, the people that walk by, the casino, the waitresses, our hotel, the food we've eaten, the things we've seen, or whatever comes to mind. The bottom line is that we play much less VP this way, and thereby get a much better drink-to-bet ratio, and enjoy our casino experience that much more.

This is how we were playing at the Seminole/HR Casino. Drink service was good, but (unlike this NG's Mecca) drinks were not free. But they had a cheap beer for my wife, and I got a Red Stripe. (Farther off topic: I had been wary of this beer before, having had a variety of Jamaican beers with less than satisfactory results, but Red Stripe was not only better than I had expected, it was actually an interesting beer for its style. Go have a Red Stripe.)

So we're playing a little VP, my wife and I. And here's the first truly odd thing about these machines: they tell you what cards to hold. That's right, when you get your five cards dealt, the machine automatically holds for you the cards that it thinks are the best to hold. You can override the choices, but you've got its decision already made for you. This "feature" bothered my wife quite a bit, but I understood its concept: make VP more attractive to the slot machine folk, who don't want to think about what there were doing. (And I will say this: during the time we played, the machine's chosen cards were always the correct cards. I don't think they were trying to grift the trusting folks with this feature.)

THE STORY (read this part)

So here we were, my wife and I, at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino, in hand-to-hand VP combat, each of us hitting the Deal button fairly close together, then doing the best we could.

During the forty or fifty hands we played, the cards were coming out oddly. There just wasn't the typical number of hold-one-high or hold-low-pair hands that (don't) pay off. The machines just seemed funny. But, of course, statistical variations being what they are, this

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uncomfortable feeling wasn't to me any thing significant, until.

Until.

My wife and I, pushing our Deal buttons at about (but not exactly) the same time, got EXACTLY THE SAME FIVE CARDS, IN EXACTLY THE SAME ORDER.

This is what a mathematician would call an "unlikely circumstance" (see note 1).

Despite the peculiar circumstance of this event, we had to finish the hand, so both my wife and I (knowing the appropriate cards to hold) chose the same cards to hold: a low pair.

We hit our Draw buttons independently, but low and behold! we got the same three cards — in exactly the same order — as a result.

Thus we had both seen eight cards, and had received precisely the same results. What are the odds of this happening? Somewhat less than 30 trillion to one (see note 2).

"Thirty trillion," you say. "That sounds like a pretty big number," you say. Yes, it is. Let's think about playing VP as I've said my wife and I play it: in tandem. How often should we expect to see hands that are identical for the first eight cards? Rarely, sure, but how rarely?

Let's say that we really, REALLY, like playing VP. Let's say that we play at an aggressive rate of one hand every ten seconds, six hands per minute, every minute of every hour, for eight hours per day. Let's say that we play this way seven days per week, 365 days per year. How long do we have to play before we can expect to have hands that are exactly the same eight cards deep?

This is how long: a little more than 14.4 million years. (See note 3.)

I claim that my wife and I, despite playing lots of VP, have not played that much VP. I therefore claim that there was more than random chance at work when we were putting our money into those machines at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in Tampa, Florida.

I haven't looked into the gaming commissions that are responsible for gaming in Florida, but I will say this: I do not trust them, and I do not trust the casinos they overlook. If you're there purely for fun, then perhaps the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in Tampa, Florida is fine for you. But for me, I prefer some place with a bit more, how shall I say it, integrity.

Oh, after that 30-plus-trillion-to-one-hand, my wife and I left the premises. We won't be back.

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Note 1.

What are the odds of the first five cards of two decks being exactly the same?

This is a simple calculation. From scratch, here's how to do it. The odds of any single card being dealt from a new deck are 1 in 52. So, given that some random deck has dealt its first card, the odds of a second deck getting that same card are 1 in 52.

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What are the odds of two decks having the same first TWO cards?

The odds of the first cards being the same are 1 in 52. But now you have only 51 cards left, so the odds of picking the same next card are 1 in 51. But this is on top of the 1-in-52 odds that we had for getting to this point, so our odds are 1 in  $52 \times 51$ , which calculates to 1 in 2652.

What are the odds of two decks having the same first THREE cards?

Just like above: take the previous odds and multiply by the odds of what you have left. Since, after two cards being deal, we've got 50 cards left, getting that one-in-fifty chance mean we've got a one in  $2652 * 50$  chance of getting it. That's one in 132,600.

What are the odds of two decks having the same first FOUR cards?

Just like above, but now we've only got 49 cards left, so it's one in  $132,600 \times 49$ , or one in 6,468,000. (As an aside, we've now reached the point where it is less likely for this to happen that it is likely for me to have sex tonight. Those are slim odds.)

What are the odds of two decks having the same first FIVE cards?

Just like above, but now we've only got 48 cards left, so it's one in  $6,468,000 \times 48$ , or one in 310,464,000.

(Is this an unlikely circumstance? I think so: I've got better odds at having a very personal Mardi Gras how-do-you-do with Nicole Kidman. No? OK, maybe you're right. Maybe I'll stick to Indian casino VP.)

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Note 2.

What are the odds that the first eight cards of two independent decks of cards should be precisely the same?

If you've read Note 1, you get the idea of how to calculate that. If you haven't read Note 1, go do that, then come back here.

We can easily see that the odds are:

odds = 1 to  $(52 * 51 * 50 * 49 * 48 * 47 * 46 * 45)$

which computes to:

odds = 1 to 30,342,338,208,000

which is a very large number. (At this point, Nicole Kidman and Adriana Lima are both mine.)

Note 3.

This is straightforward. Calculate the odds of the event, then divide by two. This gives what is commonly called the "half life" of an event,; the odds that a rare event can exist in theory before being called upon in fact. (If you think you've never heard of the concept, the "half life" is fundamental in nuclear chemistry and nuclear physics. Ever hear of the 'carbon-14' dating of old Indian artifacts? Then you've heard of half lives, and this sort of unlikely event.)

So what are the odds of this 30+trillion-to-one event happening? Given one VP hand every ten seconds, we have six hand per minute, or 360 hands per hour. At eight hours per day, we have 2,880 hands per day. At 365 days per years, we have 1,051,200 hands per year. So how long to get through half of 30+ trillion hands? We'll leave that calculation up to you.