

FROM THE MORGUE

Classic Articles From Police Gazettes Gone By

Nick the Greek, perhaps the most successful gambler in American history, continues his discussion of the difference between a "winner" and a "loser." This series on Nick originally ran in the *Police Gazette* in 1969-70 and is condensed from *Gambling Secrets of Nick the Greek* by Ted Thackrey, Jr. Copyright © 1968.

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THE GAMBLING SECRETS OF NICK THE GREEK

Part 5

THE WINNERS

Why They Are Different from Losers
There's a good reason some people always have the magic touch. Here, the greatest gambler who ever lived, tells YOU how to get lucky....

by Ted Thackrey, Jr.

Enlarging on this last point, Nick's personal advice for the player who finds himself becoming even slightly drowsy, which can happen to anyone, at any time, was to cure it by any means at hand.

Nick had once found himself in a predicament considerably more serious than any likely to be encountered by the average player.

His luck was running good. But his body was giving him trouble. A leg, swollen and painful, was intruding upon his consciousness and impairing his absorption with the game.

It was obviously time to seek medical aid. At the same time he knew he could not expect to walk away from the table to a doctor's office and find the luck still waiting there for him when he returned a week later. A compromise seemed in order.

For 55 hours Nick stayed at the table, winning steadily, while the hotel's house doctor pumped penicillin into him.

"I wound up \$54,000 to the good," he smiled reminiscently, "and the leg was cured, too, by the time the winning streak died and I could go home to get some rest."

For more mundane situations, his recommendations contained less of the heroic and more of the practical.

"If you feel drowsy after a couple of hours," he advised, "go into the bathroom and take a look at yourself in the mirror. Tell yourself it's time to show what you're really made of."

"Then clean your fingernails."

"Wash your face and hands."

"Comb your hair, blow your nose—hell, brush your teeth if you've got a toothbrush handy! In short, go over yourself as if you were just starting for the day. Make your mind a blank throughout this process. *Don't* keep thinking of the game, back there. And then, when you go back to the game, concentrate entirely on it once more."

"If the feeling comes back a few hours later take another break. Go through the same process. Or, if weather permits, take a little stroll outside the casino in the fresh air. Fresh air won't kill you. Maybe what's wrong is just inhalation of too much conditioned, synthetic

air. Or too much cigar smoke.

IMPORTANT POINT

"The point is not *what* you do, specifically. "The point is whether or not it relaxes you, refreshes you, and puts your mental equipment back in working order. If it does this, it would not matter at all whether your technique were to take a walk or meditate in the lotus position of Yoga for ten minutes."

Even the clearest and most refreshed mind, however, is of little use if its owner is lacking in understanding of the kind of game he is playing and the factors which can influence his ability to win or lose.

Nick conceded this failing, and went on to outline his plan of attack:

"The odds on all games," he said, "are admittedly, stacked against the bettor, regardless of where he does his betting. However, as I have mentioned many times before, some of the games are a better bet than others."

"Faro, for instance, is an excellent game with a very low—sometimes non-existent—house percentage. You can't ask better than an absolutely even bet, can you?"

"Crap is next, if you stick to the Pass, Come (or, as I prefer, the Don't Pass and Don't Come), and then either lay or take the odds on the points."

"Blackjack, too, has a low house edge for the expert player."

"Shimmy is a game where the house p-c is low enough to be interesting."

"But even if a player sticks to these games, he has no guarantee of coming out a winner, or even of finishing even (which is nonsense, in any case). There is no method known to humanity that can change a minus expectation (a formal term for negative odds) to a plus expectation."

"Yet, it *is* possible to win!"

"The secret—and the difference between winners and losers—is in discipline."

"That is, the winner manages his money."

"The loser lets the money manage him."

ULTIMATE TEST

Money management, as Nick saw it, was one of the ultimate tests of human character and intelligence. It requires, first of all, the basic intention of winning.

"Remember what I told you before?" he inquired. "You can only win if you intend to do so. Don't laugh! The loser loses because, back in the part of the mind where he lives, he wants to do so."

"He is punishing himself, sometimes, for something or other. Or he is demonstrating to his own satisfaction the fact of his own unworthiness."

"Who knows how many reasons a man may have to want to lose?"

"But the greatest run of luck in the world will be useless to him in this frame of mind. No matter how much he wins, he will be, literally, *afraid* to quit winners. He will stay at the table, hour after hour, until he finally gets what he wants—an empty pocket, and an empty checking account."

Nick was convinced that almost any player with any knowledge of a game knows when it's time for him to quit. Winners, he believed, heed this knowledge. Losers ignore it.

"It takes real character to quit winners," he said. "If you do this, you will have to submit to

admiration and envy from other players—perhaps even from the management of the casino. Nobody would think of pitying a winner."

"So it comes down to a matter of what you'd rather have: Pity or admiration?"

"Think it over. When you've made up your mind, half the work is done."

WINNING RULES

The rules for becoming a winner—and the explanation of how such a thing can happen in defiance of odds—seemed remarkably simple from Nick's point of view.

"Not that I always follow them," he admitted ruefully. "There is some evidence to indicate that I am a member of the human race, and thus prey to its follies and self-deceptions. But when I do *not* follow these rules, at least I try not to deceive myself about what I have done when I reexamine the matter, later."

The technique of winning he summoned up in a simple thought-problem. It went this way:

Suppose a man enters a casino with \$500 in his pocket once every month for six months, and refuses at any time to write a check for more or to borrow additional funds.

Suppose, further, that for the first five sessions he loses his \$500 stake. That's a run of bad luck in anybody's book, but it can happen to the best gamblers in the world. And does.

But then suppose this same man makes his sixth foray—again with just \$500 as the total stake he is willing to risk—and hits his first streak of *good* luck.

He can play it either one of two ways.

He can bet *exactly the same way and in the same amounts* as he did on his first trip—perhaps even cutting the amounts down a little, because he doesn't want to seem too eager—and win \$500 or so.

Or he can increase the amounts of his bets and hit the tables for \$5,000 or more.

The first way, he's still a \$1,500 loser when he quits.

The second way, he's a \$3,000 winner.

"Which way," Nick inquired, "would you rather see yourself?"

LIMIT LOSSES

"If your choice is the second way, there is only one method by which you can put yourself in the picture. That is to *limit your losses* to an amount which you determine *before you set foot in the casino*—but put *no limit of any kind* on your winnings."

"Peculiarly, this is exactly the opposite of the plan followed by a good 98 percent of all gamblers."

"They somehow fear to win."

"So when they have won a little bit—a pitifully little bit, in most cases—they stop playing. Well, certainly this is half a step in the right direction. At least they didn't just keep playing forever until they could collect sympathy as losers."

"But it still makes no sense, because had they lost they would have continued cashing checks and even borrowing money and losing that, too. They place no limit of any kind on how much they can lose—only on how much they can win."

"Naturally, nobody could expect to win on that basis."

Next month, Nick wraps up the difference between winners and losers.