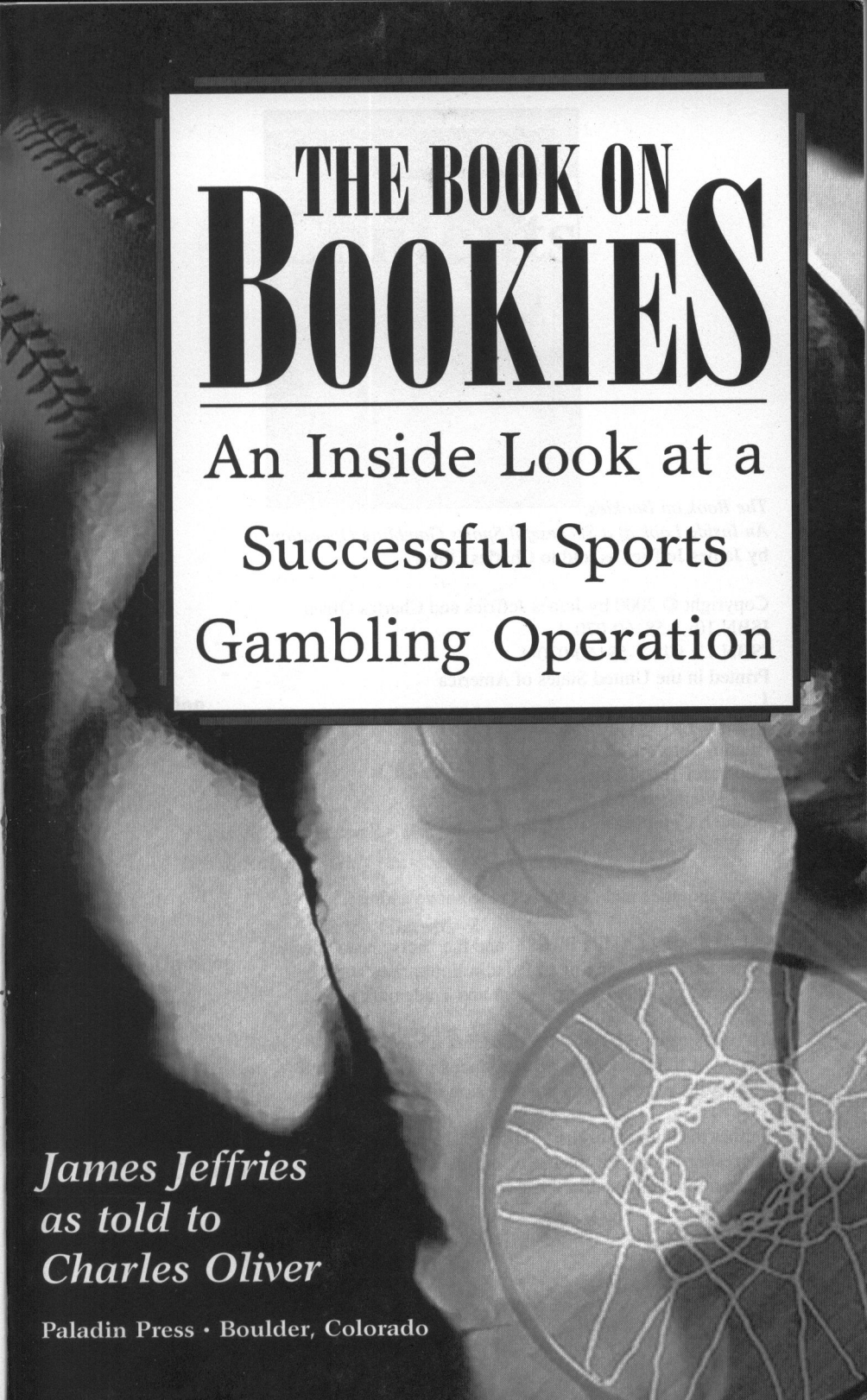


# THE BOOK ON BOOKIES

An Inside Look at a  
Successful Sports  
Gambling Operation

*James Jeffries  
as told to  
Charles Oliver*



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Paladin Press • Boulder, Colorado

*The Book on Bookies:*

*An Inside Look at a Successful Sports Gambling Operation*

by James Jeffries as told to Charles Oliver

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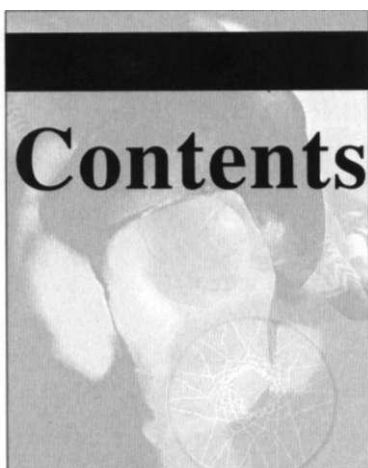
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<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
---------------------------	---

## **Chapter 1**

Gambling Basics .....	5
<i>Football • Basketball • Baseball • Hockey • Boxing • Horse Racing • Golf* Soccer • NASCAR • "Futures"</i>	

## **Chapter 2**

Setting Up Shop .....	61
-----------------------	----

## **Chapter 3**

Being the Boss (. . . Maybe) .....	69
------------------------------------	----

## **Chapter 4**

Getting Customers .....	77
-------------------------	----

## Chapter 5

In the Office. . . . .	83
------------------------	----

## Chapter 6

Taking Action (and Making the Lines Work for You!). . . . .	93
--	----

## Chapter 7

Grading the Homework. . . . .	109
-------------------------------	-----

## Chapter 8

The Pay sheet (Read This One Twice!).....	111
---	-----

## Chapter 9

Settle-Up Day. . . . .	117
------------------------	-----

## Chapter 10

Bigger and Better. . . . .	125
----------------------------	-----

## Chapter 11

Other Benefits of Being "The Man" (or More Reasons It's Better to Be on Your End of the Phone). . . . .	131
--	-----

## Chapter 12

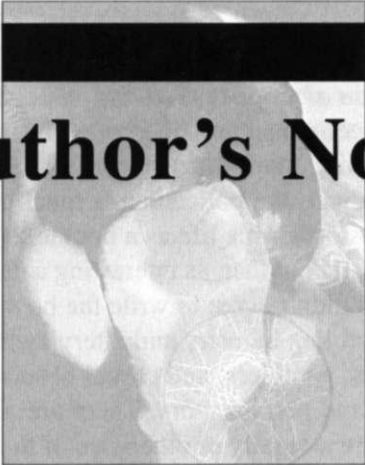
What to Avoid. . . . .	137
------------------------	-----

## Chapter 13

What Will Get You Caught? (Read This One Three or Four Times). . . . .	143
---	-----

<b>Final Thoughts.</b> . . . .	147
--------------------------------	-----

<b>Glossary.</b> . . . .	151
--------------------------	-----



# Author's Note

**T**his book was written after a chance meeting with James Jefferies (J.J.). My buddy Chris and I were enjoying an "all-you-can-eat" wing special at a sports bar just north of Atlanta, and J.J. was at the table next to ours. He overheard our talking sports and struck up a conversation that led to the eventual, "So what do you do for a living?" I answered, "I write," to which he countered with not nearly as boring an answer, "I'm a bookie." I listened for the next hour or so as he expounded on the adrenaline-filled, mile-a-minute life of taking millions of dollars worth of sports bets. The thought I left with that night was, "What an entertaining story ..."—and that's how this book should be read: it's an entertaining story.

Our purpose in writing this is not to spur a legion of citizens into becoming bookies or to encourage anyone to cash out the 401K and set up shop. The story J.J. tells is entertaining, and that's all that should be seen in it. We agreed to write his tale from the perspective of a step-by-step guide for the simple reason that he knew he would leave out too much if we wrote it any other way. It's kind of like

watching an episode of *Cops* on Fox-TV. A policeman sitting in an interview room recounting his adventures on the street would be somewhat entertaining, but the camera-in-the-car perspective of being on the street with the policeman is much more riveting. This book is one man's story of his life as a bookie. Nothing more.

I should also point out that, as interesting a narrative as I thought this could be, I still didn't agree to write the book at first. Only after researching the gambling industry and interviewing countless casino employees, bookies, gamblers, and casual observers did I decide to sit down with JJ. and pen his story. There are a lot of people who gamble in this country, legally or otherwise. If the state governments had any sense, they would give much more consideration to legalizing, regulating, and taxing sports wagering. It is my sincere hope that J.J.'s story is read by at least one person in a decision-making position in a state government and that the road to legalized sports wagering will start being paved. If citizens gamble on sports and if bookies make *billions* of dollars every year without paying a nickel in taxes, doesn't it make sense that state governments could step in and take their share?

You want more money for libraries? Here, have a hundred libraries. You need more money for preschool programs and free lunches for underprivileged students? Take as much as you can carry. You require a tax increase to pay for road improvements? Fill every pothole from here to the shining sea and still have millions left over every year by legalizing, regulating, and taxing sports wagering.

There are those that would argue that sports wagering is another of society's ills and that allowing people to gamble could be the undoing of any moral thread still left in our country. Look at those words carefully: *allowing people to gamble*. That means giving them the choice. One thing I found out from doing my research for this book was that no one ever encouraged the customers to gamble. No one dialed the phone number. No one gave the customers a hot tip. People who call to place sports wagers do so out of choice. Keeping sports wagering illegal is simply another way of the government saying, "We will make the choice for you because we know

#### AUTHOR'S NOTE

what is really best." Too bad, because sports wagering is an exciting, thrilling industry that only makes the games more interesting to the fan. Read Mr. Jefferies' story, and I think you will agree.



# Introduction



**I**f you are trying to decide if you would rather make calls to a bookie or take calls as a bookie, consider the following point: *People who gamble on sports lose money.*

It can be no simpler than that. If you are a gambler and had a record of every sports bet you had ever made, would your winnings be plus or minus? If this is the beginning of a sports season—it doesn't matter which sport—I will guarantee you that by the end of this season, you will have lost more money than you will have won.

If there is any doubt in your mind about which end of the betting transaction is more profitable to be on, consider that the only thing a casino has to do to ensure a profit is to open its doors. Why do you think Caesar's Palace paid for all those bright lights? Why do you think The Stardust gives away "free" buffets and "complimentary" rooms like they were Halloween candy? Has it ever occurred to you why Binion's would send a private jet to Miami or New York or Los Angeles to pick up a customer and return to Las Vegas with said customer, all at "no cost"? Why do you think a backwoods hick who didn't make it out of 10th grade (I know this man personally) can

become a bookie and pay cash for a \$299,000 custom-built home and a pair of new Dodge Ram V-12s? The answer is because gamblers lose money.

"Not me!" I hear you saying. Yes, I know, not you because

- you are smarter than other gamblers (probably not true);
- you are smarter than the bookies (definitely not true);
- you are going to concentrate more on it this season (of course, you are);
- you have a system (and? . . .);
- blah, blah, blah.

"Yes you!" I reply. If you gamble on sports, you will lose money. Why? Well, all things being equal . . . and we can stop right there. All things will never be equal when you make sports bets. Here are the reasons:

1. You have to pay the bookie more if you lose than the bookie has to pay you if he loses.
2. The bookie always gets to set the betting lines, and he always knows what you are going to play.

In oversimplified terms, that is the entirety of how you can either pay someone a few thousand dollars over the course of any given sports season, or how you can collect a few thousand dollars each from a lot of people over the course of the same sports season. Heck, we can even turn it into an SAT question. Number two pencils ready?

1. Would you rather lose money or win money?
  - A. Lose money
  - B. Win money

That is the only question you need to ask yourself. Win or lose? Rich or poor? This book will show you everything you need to know,

## INTRODUCTION

every step you need to take, and every potential pitfall to avoid once you have decided to be a bookie!

Becoming a bookie may be a scary proposition for you right now. I know some of you reading this are having that very thought. If the idea of being a bookie is not for you, at the very least, buy this book to have all the information that your bookie has, discover how he adjusts the lines (and when), and know the betting strategies to give yourself the best chance possible against him. However, for those of you who are tired of paying your man and then paying some more, read on.

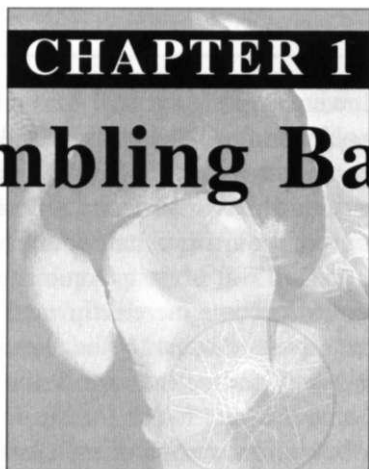
In the pages that follow, you will learn the language of the bookie. We will go over a detailed accounting of all possible bets your customers may wish to place—and which ones you won't want to take. Every item needed for an efficient, capably run office is discussed (even down to why you only use yellow highlighters—*yes, it does make a difference*). Decisions about how many employees you will have (if any) can be made using the guidelines in Chapter 3. The easiest ways to get new customers and the fastest ways you can lose your existing customers are both dealt with at length. Easy (and extremely necessary) phone protocol is laid out, as is the perfect itinerary for "settle-up day." Ways you can spend petty cash and earn back hundreds and even thousands are included, as are by-the-number instructions for creating the perfect "Calcutta" (applicable to NCAA basketball or any golf tournament).

I gambled on sports from 1980 (as a high school junior) through the early part of 1991 (bankruptcy court). Over that time, I lost an estimated \$150,000, including \$22,000 on my biggest play ever, Miami -7 versus Penn State in the 1987 Fiesta Bowl. Penn State won outright, 14-10. In March 1991, needing some income and needing no one to know about it, I went to work full time for one of the largest bookies in the Southeast, and by the end of the NBA Finals the following year (about 16 months), I had earned back every penny I had ever lost on sports gambling . . . *and I was the clerk*. Seeing where the real money was, I began saving every dollar possible and purchased the company from my boss in August

1995. I have since retired, selling my business to two of my own clerks for a large amount of cash up front, as well as a nice percentage for the next two years while they do all the work. I am 37 years old and have more than \$800,000 (cash) in a few safety-deposit boxes scattered throughout Georgia and Florida. I have no bills and no debt and will continue to make a substantial income (all cash) under the deal with my former clerks. The complete arrangement is discussed later in the book.

## CHAPTER 1

# Gambling Basics



**T**he favorite sport to bet on will vary from customer to customer. You may have some callers who only bet college football, some who only bet NASCAR, and one guy who always plays \$100 on Texas Tech or Stanford or Arizona State, regardless of sport or season. Taking such varied action will require you to be knowledgeable about all the possible sports on which to bet, as well as the different types of wagers available for each sport.

In this chapter, we will address 10 separate sports that will account for 99 percent of all action you will write. Occasionally a customer will ask you to give him a line on the presidential election or the odds that a particular movie will win Best Picture. You can find a betting number if you choose, but my response was always that we operated a sports book and were not interested in other types of bets. In reality, I have made a fortune taking action on all manner of things, but if you begin taking nonstandard action as a favor, the customer will consider it a right and bitch when you don't take the bet.

Take the time to read thoroughly everything we discuss in the pages ahead. A promise: if you take action based on the guidelines

laid out in the following pages, you will turn a tremendous profit from your sports book operation. The ideas we talk about are not difficult ones to understand, nor do they require you to know the batting averages of every third baseman in the American League or the free throw percentage of Louisiana State University's point guard. What is required is a small roll of cash, some hard work at the outset, and a willingness to become incredibly wealthy while having a reason to watch every sports contest that is televised. If you do follow my guidelines, I may see you on the beach one day in Costa Rica, my adopted home. Be sure to ask for Mr. Jefferies, though my friends call me J J., but if you are one of my customers from when I was still a clerk, you may know me as Bobby or Nick or Atlanta Steve or Richie Irish. Also, to the lunch shift dancer at the Cheetah 3, my real name is James, not Troy.

## FOOTBALL

In the United States, football—both college and pro—is the gambler's favorite sport. The bettor enjoys football season because of the many different ways to bet, because every play has the potential to greatly affect his wager, and because he can see nearly every game on television. For these reasons, and a few lesser ones, August and September are the months when your list of clients will swell and your bankroll will fatten. At this time of year, being a professional, courteous, and intelligent bookie will also make you a wealthy bookie.

You will reopen for football season during the last part of July (you had shut down for a few weeks after baseball's All-Star game . . . we cover why in Chapter 10 on growing your business). The National Football League's preseason games will begin sometime around July 25, and you want your phones on at least three or four days in advance of that. Not as many customers bet on baseball, and those who do so only gamble on the sport because they are compulsive gamblers and there is no other available bet for about six weeks in the middle of summer. ALL gamblers would much rather bet on

football, so don't be surprised when the phones ring off the hook for a New Orleans-San Diego preseason football game, while that day no one seems to care if the Dodgers even exist anymore. By opening for the NFL preseason, you will give all your customers plenty of time to get the new phone numbers before the real games start about a month later. By opening day of the NFL, all routines for what times you will be open, the available wagers, and where you meet to settle up (and at what figure) should be established. During the regular season is not the time to be spoon-feeding first-timers. Open for preseason. Trust me.

The number of different wagers available for football games is far greater than that for other sports. What we will cover here are the most typical bets your customers will want, the terminology involved, and which bets you won't want to take. We will follow that with a brief discussion of "exotics"—wagers you will make available only for the Super Bowl and certain college bowl games.

**The Straight Bet**

The straight bet is about as basic as you can get in gambling. For almost every football game, professional and college, there will be a listing of the two teams playing and two numbers beside those teams. It will look like this:

Detroit	48.5
Miami	9.5

The visiting team is listed on top, with the home team listed below that. For this game, the Detroit Lions have traveled to Miami. The numbers beside the teams will tell you two things. First of all, the "total" for the game is 48.5 points. That means that the projected number of points that both teams (Detroit and Miami) will combine to score is 48.5. The smaller number, the "spread," is 9.5 and is listed beside Miami. That means that Miami is projected to win this game by 9.5 points. Which team actually wins this matchup is probably inconsequential to the gambler. What he cares

about is "covering the spread"—that is, did his team either win by more than 9.5 points (if he bet Miami), or did his team come within 9.5 points of winning (Detroit)? If Joe Gambler wagered \$100 on Miami and the Dolphins win the game 28-20, that's great for the Dolphins, not so great for Joe. Miami didn't win by at least 9.5 points, so Joe loses his bet. If his buddy Steve took Detroit plus the 9.5 points, even though the Lions were beaten pretty easily by Miami, Steve would still win his bet because Detroit had come within 9.5 points of winning. Many people will refer to betting the spread as the "side," as in, "Which side did you bet?" Betting the spread (or side) is a straight play.

So Joe wagered \$100 and lost, while Steve wagered \$100 and won. You know the best thing about this? You had the exact same amount of action on each side of the game, and you will come out ahead. That is because, while Steve won his \$100, Joe winds up losing \$110. On a straight play, a winning bet will win the gambler whatever was risked. However, on a losing straight play, the gambler must pay not only the amount of the wager but also an additional 10 percent, call "juice" or "vigorish." Because of this, Joe loses \$110. So that there are never any questions about how you pay off or collect on wagers, you should structure your business based on "Vegas rules." That means that whatever the casinos in Las Vegas do, so do you. Every casino in Las Vegas and every bookmaker on the planet charges a 10 percent vigorish for most straight plays. While customers don't like paying the "vig," if you didn't charge it, it would seriously cut into your profits and make you seem amateurish to the players. Betting the spread is a straight play, and the vig on most straight plays will be 10 percent.

The other number we had listed was the "total." If it appears that betting the side could make a person care a lot less about who actually wins a game, betting the "total" will completely devalue winning and losing. If Joe had decided to play the total, he has a choice of going "over" or "under." He could have bet that the combined score of Detroit and Miami would be over 48.5 or under 48.5. In this example, the game finished under the total by all of a half-point. All



wagers under the total win; all wagers over the total lose. What could be simpler? Well, for most of the action you take, nothing will be simpler. A customer will call and tell you he has "six plays for today. \$100 each. I want Pittsburgh, Detroit, Dallas, Atlanta, San Diego, and the Baltimore game under." Six straight plays for \$100 each, and the call is completed. That will take care of most players.

The customers who go beyond straight plays will require a bit more effort on your part, but the added sweat will be minimal and well worth it.

### **Buying a Half-Point**

An option that sometimes will make sense to the gambler is to "buy" a half-point. After checking the line, a customer may decide to risk paying double juice to gain a half-point advantage on either the side or total. First, we will talk about how buying a half-point works and then we will detail the business side of it.

In the above example, we have Miami favored by 9.5 with a total of 48.5. The final score was 28-20. Our friend Joe could have decided that 9.5 points were just a bit more than he felt comfortable laying and that he would buy a half-point. Now, instead of having Miami -9.5 while risking \$110 to win \$100, Joe would have Miami -9 while risking \$120 (double the normal 10 percent juice) to win the very same \$100. Joe would have still lost his bet (Miami only won by 8), but now he would be down \$120 instead of \$110. He risked the double juice and lost, as buying the extra half-point did him no good.

Let's say, however, that Joe had also wanted to win \$100 on the game going over the total but bought a half-point with that wager, too. Now Joe's bet is risking \$120 to win \$100 that the two teams will combine to go over 48 points. The teams combine for exactly that amount, so the bet is a "push" (tie), and no money exchanges hands. While buying the half-point on the side wound up costing Joe an extra \$10, using the same strategy on the total saved him \$110 because he pushed on the wager instead of losing it. What about a customer who buys a half-point on a winning play? If Steve would

have bet the Lions and "bought" the side up to 10, he still would have won the bet and collected the same \$100. In that instance, his buying the half-point had no effect on the outcome of the wager.

Buying a half-point is something that customers usually will do only on sides and usually only with a spread that involves a 3 or a 7. If Miami had been favored by 7.5 instead of 9.5, some of your customers might have thought it wise to buy the Dolphins down to 7. It wouldn't have mattered in this case, but in many games the outcome will be either 3 or 7 points and the customer feels that he is giving himself a better chance at winning (or at least not losing) if he buys a half-point when the line involves a 3 or 7. He is mistaken in this assumption, but if it makes the customer feel better, so be it. If the line on the above game was Miami -7.5, the customer may say, "Give me \$100 on Miami and I want to buy the hook," meaning he wants to get rid of the half-point on the end of the spread. If the line was a straight 7, there would be no hook to buy, but a caller may wish to buy the game to 6.5. In this way, the bettor is looking to win a game that falls exactly at 7 points, instead of just pushing.

Allowing customers the option of buying a half-point will only help your business. Understand that there will be games where your customers appear to have gotten the better of you because you let them buy half-points. A caller may have "North Carolina State for \$1,000, and I want to buy it down to 3." This means that N.C. State may be a 3.5 point favorite and he wants to risk \$1,200 (instead of just \$1,100) to win \$1,000. The final score may have N.C. State winning 24-21. If your customer had taken the line as it existed, you would have won \$1,100 from him. Instead, the game is a push, and you win nothing. Don't worry about that. Just remind yourself that letting customers buy the half-point will put money in your pocket two ways:

1. Many more games will have a final score where buying the half-point does nothing to affect the wager. N.C. State could have won the game by 4 points or 104 points, and it still would not have affected how much the customer won (in this case, \$1,000). By the same token, N.C. State could have lost

the game by any amount or won by less than 3 and now you would be collecting double the normal juice. Over the long run (your concern should always be the long run), you will make much more money collecting double juice than you will ever lose from a player getting a tie here and there because of buying a half-point.

2. The more freedom you give your customers, the more you allow them to feel that they are in control, the more loyal they will be, and that produces dividends to you in a few different ways. Most immediately, the customer will not feel that you have screwed him in any way and won't harbor bad feelings toward you. Bad feelings between bookie and client cause debts to go unpaid and, sometimes, people to get fingerprinted (namely, you).

Another reason to allow customers to buy a half-point is that it is just one more way of showing that you are superior to other bookies in your area. Gamblers have a habit of running into other gamblers, and if one of your customers can brag to his buddies that, among other goodies, he is allowed to buy a half-point, his friends may ask to be put on with you. Remember, a customer who plays just \$50 and \$100 a game will still lose approximately \$2,000 during a football season. If you get even one more customer because you operate by Vegas rules and treat your customers with respect, it is worth it.

Besides straight plays on the side or total, buying the half-point is only one of several other types of wagers that your customers may wish to make on football games. Others include parlays, teasers, "A & Rs," the money line, and exotics.

### **Parlays**

A parlay is a wager that requires the customer to win not just one straight bet, but two or three or as many as four. For his bet to

be a winner, the gambler must win all games on his parlay. If a customer makes a three-team parlay and wins two and loses one, the entire parlay loses. Whereas winning a single straight bet is a bit easier and will pay off at a rate of 1:1, parlays are more difficult to win and, therefore, pay off at more attractive odds. The payoff is as follows:

<b>Number of teams in parlay</b>	<b>Payoff</b>
2	2.6-1
3	5-1
4	10-1

Let's go back to our original game and deal with winning parlays. The line was Miami 9.5 and 48.5, with the final score being Miami 28, Detroit 20. The only winning parlay for this game would have been Detroit and under. A customer who played that parlay would have won \$260 for every \$100 risked. If he played \$500 on the parlay, the payoff to him would be \$1,300. On the same NFL Sunday, however, Baltimore is playing at Chicago and is a 6-point favorite, with the total being 44.5. Remember that the line would be posted as:

Baltimore	6
Chicago	44.5

Again, the home team is listed on the bottom. At game's end, Baltimore is a 31-20 winner. If our buddy Joe had decided he wanted a three-team parlay, a possible winner would have been Detroit, the Detroit under, and Baltimore. If he wagers \$100 on that bet, he wins \$500. Some bookies will accept four-team parlays that pay 10 to 1. It is best to only offer two-team and three-team parlays, as players will only resort to four-team parlays to try and get themselves out of a hole. Rarely do four-team parlays win, and then the customer winds up completely buried. With no way out, he may choose to simply not pay his debt, and you collect nothing.

These are the basics for winning parlays. While you should know the odds and how their payoff works, you will write many more losing parlays, so we move on now.

What defeats a parlay is fairly simple: any loss makes the entire parlay a loser. A difference between a straight bet that loses and a parlay that loses is that the parlay does not have any juice attached to it. Casinos and bookies want to attract as much action as possible to parlays; as incentive, a \$100 parlay that loses will only cost the gambler \$100, no matter if it is a 2-team or a 3-team. The reason bookmakers love their customers to play parlays is because it is one of the worse possible sports bets a gambler can make. With a 2.6-1 payoff, a two-team parlay may seem like easy money to the gambler. However, the real odds of betting on two teams in a parlay and having them both win is actually 3-1. The difference in paying only \$260 on a bet that should pay \$300 may not seem like much, but consider that it is a house advantage of almost 14 percent. There is even more advantage to the bookie in the three-teamer, which pays 5-1. The true odds there? Seven to one, yielding a whopping 29 percent as house advantage. Do remember that Vegas rules dictate that it doesn't matter if the customer loses one, two, or all three of the bets in that parlay. He only loses the \$100, no juice, no vig. Amazingly, as much as the parlay is already in the favor of the bookie, some amateur bookies think only of "now money"—the "today dollar"—and do things like charge juice or double juice or, still worse, take away a half-point from each of the sides or totals involved in a parlay.

Conduct your business as a business and show courtesy and professionalism, and you will have all of those bookies' customers asking to be put on with you. Have faith. As mentioned earlier, gamblers tend to find other gamblers and won't hesitate to leave a bookie who steals from them.

What about a tie in a parlay? If the customer had called in a three-teamer and he wins two and ties the third, the parlay then drops down to a two-teamer and pays 2.6:1. Again, any loss makes the entire parlay a loser, so he could have tied two of the games and lost the third, and he still loses the bet. If the customer had placed a two-

teamer and he wins one and ties the other, the bet pays off at .92 per dollar wagered. A \$100 parlay with one tie and one win pays the gambler \$92. A \$500 parlay in the same situation pays \$460. Where does paying off at 92 cents on the dollar come from? As we stated earlier, operate your business according to Vegas rules and your customers will never have a reason to complain. Vegas pays off at .92 per dollar wagered, and so should you.

### Teasers

A teaser will be the single most profitable bet you will take on football. It is similar to a parlay, in that the gambler must win more than one game to collect, but the attractiveness isn't in increased odds. The teaser pays off exactly like the straight play does (1:1), and, unlike the parlay, there is juice on a teaser (the standard 10 percent). Why then do gamblers fall in love with teasers?

In a two-team teaser, the bettor can adjust the side for any two games by six points in each game. Remember that teasers are available *only* for the side, not the total. Suppose that the Miami and Detroit game still hasn't kicked off and the Baltimore game is available also. The favorites in the games are Miami by 9.5 and Baltimore by 6. Joe can decide he wants a two-teamer with Baltimore and Miami (like most gamblers, he plays the favorites). Since he can adjust the line by six points for each game, Joe now has Baltimore as a pick (even instead of -6; a pick is when neither team is favored) and Miami -4 (instead of -9.5). Notice that the Miami line in a two-teamer is, *not* 3.5. One of the things that makes the teaser such a profit maker for the bookie is that if there is a half-point on the line of a game, the bookie gets it. If Joe were to truly get 6 points, he would have Miami at -3.5, but there are no half-points in teasers. The line is rounded up to -4. If he had decided that he wanted Chicago and Detroit in the two-teamer, his lines would have been Chicago +12 and Detroit +15, again, with the bookie getting the half-point.

Sometimes a customer will want a two-teamer—*on the same game*. If that were the case here, Joe would have Baltimore pick and

Chicago +12. It's not often you have a customer that desperate to gamble, and if you do, he will soon be broke. The most likely scenario for this bet is on Monday night, when there is only one game.

If Joe had wanted a three-teamer, he would operate under the same guidelines, but instead of only having to win two games, he would have to win three, and instead of getting 6 points per game, he would get 10. If Dallas is a 10-point favorite, he could have a \$100 teaser on Dallas pick, Baltimore +4, and Miami pick. If Dallas is 10.5, the teaser would then have Dallas as -1.

As good as it is to have the half-point, an even better part of taking teasers is that if one of the games ties, the bet loses. Joe has the above three-teamer with Dallas pick, Baltimore +4, and Miami pick. Dallas wins 21-13, Miami wins 28-20, and Baltimore loses 31-27. Dallas and Miami both cover the teaser line (even though Dallas wouldn't have covered the straight spread), but Baltimore lost by 4. Since the teaser had the Ravens +4, this would make the score 31-31, and the complete wager is a loss.

A teaser is a sucker bet and, possibly, the worst play that a gambler could make (no easy feat). If you have customers who play nothing but teasers and, to a lesser extent, parlays, you will become rich off them. My first year of clerking for Curtis (my boss), he had a customer who played \$1,000 a game. The customer only played straight plays and wound up losing about \$15,000 that season. The following year, he started playing teasers and paid Curtis more than \$60,000 before zeroing his account and drifting away. A friend of Curtis', a guy named Issac, made book in Savannah and had a chiropractor who played with him. Like everyone else who gambles, the doctor lost, but he also only played straight plays. So Issac told a mutual friend of his and the doctor's that if the friend could convince the doc to begin playing teasers, Issac would let the friend play without having to pay any juice. *That's how profitable teasers are to you as a bookie.* I don't suggest making offers like that because if it had gotten back to the doc, he would have felt taken advantage of, and that is never good. The point is that teasers are a license to print money. Write them until you run out of ink.

Together, teasers and parlays are referred to as "propositions" or "props." Remember this about props: while the gambler has to win at least two games—possibly three—to win his bet, you only have to win one.

Straights, teasers, and parlays will cover 99 percent of all wagers your customers will want to make. Sometimes a customer will want to get the first one or two "legs" (games) of a prop and call back later to fill in the final team. Not allowed. Or he may want to bet a prop with one team from Sunday, paired with a team that is playing on Monday night. Not allowed. Remember, if Vegas doesn't do it, neither do you. All games necessary to fill out a bet must be given on the same call, and all action in a bet must take place on the same day. In the rare occurrence (usually during the college bowl season) when a college and pro game are on the same day, customers can mix and match the two all they want. But they must call in the complete proposition on one call, and the entire bet must win or lose on the same day. At no time can a customer combine different sports (football and basketball, for example) on a prop. Remember, Vegas rules.

### **"A & R"**

Occasionally, a caller will want to play an "A & R" (action reverse). This is a wager where a \$1,000 bet could win or lose up to \$10,000. If Dallas is listed as pick against New Orleans and a gambler wants an "A & R" for \$1,000 on Dallas, then for every point Dallas covers the spread by, up to 10, the gambler wins the bet amount times that number. Dallas wins 21-20? The customer wins \$1,000. Dallas wins 17-9? The customer wins \$8,000. The problem comes in the losing, as Dallas could fall 24-14 and now, instead of losing the \$1,000 bet plus \$100 juice on a straight play, the customer is now on the hook for \$10,000. No juice is attached to an "A & R," but take these bets, and you will wind up completely burying a customer and losing him.

### **Money Lines**

Betting a money line means there is not a point spread that one team must cover, but rather a team must only win the game. The



favorite is given at negative odds and the underdog at plus odds. Money lines are most often used in baseball and are discussed in more depth in that section.

### Exotics

Exotics are specialty bets that offer an almost unlimited variety of wagers. An example of an exotic bet is whether Tiger Woods would finish in the top three of the Masters. Exotics can be made in any sport, but golfers seem to favor them. A fuller explanation and several examples are included in the section on golf.

When I first started clerking, my boss had a saying: "Write the damn action." What he meant was the more action we write, the more money we make. It may seem like a simple point, but the meaning cannot be overemphasized. A huge mistake some bookies make is to get scared off by customers who want to play big. The bookie is worried that the customer may be a very good gambler and run him out of business. Two things to remember:

1. Nobody is a "good gambler." There are some that are not as bad as others and some that hit streaks of good luck, but nobody is a good gambler.
2. Letting a customer play big is only giving him rope. It may sound strange, but the best thing that can happen to you as a bookie is for a customer who likes to play \$1,000 a game to get on a roll and have a huge week or two. At that point, he begins to think that he really is good at gambling, and he is hooked. No matter how much he loses (he will lose), he will always remember collecting \$15,000 or \$20,000 that one week, and he will keep on playing. The worst thing you could do is cut him off. All of your money that you sent him will come back to you, plus a substantial amount of his own.

## BASKETBALL

Basketball is a simple enough sport on which to take action, closely resembling football in types of wagers and how a bet is won or lost. In basketball there will be a point spread and, just like in football, the final score will have one team covering the spread and the other team a wagering loser. There are some slight differences and a couple of nuances to learn that will help you post sharper lines than other books in your area, but the essentials of taking action for hoops are not far removed from football.

### Straight Bets

This will have one team favored by a certain number of points over the opposition. The numbers are posted as:

Cleveland	171-
Utah	9-

In this scenario, Cleveland is playing at Utah and the Jazz is favored by 9.5 points (the mark that looks like a minus sign after the above numbers is an indication of a half-point). The total for this game is 171.5. A winning straight bet in basketball pays 1:1. A losing straight bet in basketball loses the amount of the wager plus 10 percent (11:10). half-points can be bought in basketball for the side or the total. If you get customers who want to start buying half-points on basketball totals, send them my way. These customers will soon be parted from lots of their money.

### Parlays

Parlays work the same in basketball as they do with the pigskin. A two-teamer pays 2.6:1, while a three-teamer pays 5:1. As with the parlays we discussed earlier, basketball parlays must win both or all three games to be a winner. One loser and the entire bet is a loser. There is no juice paid on a losing parlay, as the customer will lose only the amount of the wager. If a parlay involves no losing teams

but does include a tie, the parlay will drop from a 3-teamer to a 2-teamer and pay 2.6:1. If a 2-teamer finishes as one winner and one tie, it drops to a straight bet on the winning team and pays 92 cents on the dollar for the amount of the bet. A slight difference from your policy in football is that you should accept basketball four-team parlays. They will pay the customer 10:1 for a winning 4-teamer. The true odds for a winning 4-teamer should pay the customer about 16:1, so take all of them you can write. When your customer calls in and says he would like a four-team basketball parlay, you should thank him.

### Teasers

These wagers will operate under the same parameters as the football teasers with regard to the customer's losing the half-point (if there is one) on a teased point spread and in that a tie will cause the entire teaser to lose. One difference, however, is the amount of points involved in changing the lines. A football teaser gives the customer 6 points on a two-teamer and 10 points on a three-teamer. Basketball only allows for a 5-point swing on a teaser with two teams and an 8-point shift in a three-team wager.

Some bookies allow their customers to place four-team basketball teasers. You can if you wish, but I never did. A four-teamer is a desperation bet, and you want to give your customers as few chances as possible to completely bury themselves. If you choose to deal four-teamers, the customer can shift the line 12 points for each of four different teams.

### Tips

Sometimes bookies will post money lines for basketball games with a relatively small spread, usually less than 5 points. From a profit standpoint (the only standpoint in which we are interested), you should do well with this. Most basketball games don't finish right near the point spread, and with so many games played by the college and pro teams, every team loses games they may have been favored to win by a point or two. Remember, however, to only give

a money line if a customer requests it and only for the specific game he wants. (Money lines are explained in-depth in the following section on baseball.)

Most of your callers are plenty used to a point spread on basketball games, and you will take piles of their cash dealing only point spreads. On a night with 27 college and pro games, you will have 27 point spreads to stay on top of. There is no need to double your workload by getting a lot of your callers accustomed to having 27 point spreads and 27 money lines.

As with football, you should pay attention to changes in the side involving a basketball game, but be particularly conscious of changes in the totals. About a third of the sides will change during the night, and none more than a point or so. Almost all of the totals will change and by as much as three or four points. If you have a customer who always calls as soon as you open and just before you close, he is making that second call for a reason. He has seen the Miami total go from 183 to 186-. He will call 10 seconds before you are supposed to close for the evening and want to bet the game over 183, thus gaining a 3-point advantage. Be sure to pay attention to which customers repeatedly call and bet the changes, and always give those customers the updated lines when they do ring you. The SportsTracker II software from Jim Feist Productions will display an unchanged line in black on your computer screen, while a line that has moved will turn to red. You can even select an option that will have your computer buzz when a line has changed. This is particularly helpful if you have lazy clerks.

During basketball season, the worst nights of the week will be Tuesday and Thursday. I believe the last season I ran the business before selling, there were 305 division one college basketball teams. Almost all of them will play on Tuesday and Thursday nights during January and February. You can also toss in 10 or so NBA games for each of those nights. On the plus side, the only college basketball you will have to deal with on Fridays will be the Ivy League games. With the exception of an occasional game in the Mountain West Conference, only the Ivy League plays

on Friday nights, and they only have eight teams (that means four games). I guess Dartmouth and Cornell students don't have much else to do on a Friday night, and basketball played by slow white kids with crew cuts is considered high entertainment. Regardless, the Ivy League teams play on Friday nights and are usually the only games on the schedule. It kinda lets you rest up for the weekend (half of the other 305 teams will play a Saturday game; the other half plays on Sunday).

**BASEBALL**

At best, baseball is a sport on which most bookies hate taking action. Some even treat America's pastime with more contempt and will close shop altogether for the month or so during the summer when it's the only game in town. These bookies are lazy and cheat themselves out of profit. To ensure financial gain during this time of year, there are a few more hoops to jump through and a few scenarios to avoid, but, dealt properly, baseball season can be extremely profitable for you.

**The Money Line**

Baseball is most often bet using a money line. This means there is not a point spread that one team must cover, but rather a team must only win the game. The favorite is given at negative odds and the underdog at plus odds. An example of a typical line for a baseball game is as follows:

Milwaukee	8- over
Houston	-155

This game has the Houston Astros hosting the Milwaukee Brewers. As in football, the home team will be listed on the bottom. Sometimes you will see the home team listed in bold letters or all caps, but here we have a standard line like you will see in Las Vegas with visitor on top and home team below.

What are the numbers beside each team? Well, as in football, the two main bets available for baseball are a side and total. The side in this game is "Houston -155". That means that for every \$100 a customer wants to win on Houston, he will risk \$155 if he bets Houston and the team loses. The house advantage is built into the system where a \$100 winner on Milwaukee will only pay the bettor \$145. The difference between Houston being -155 and Milwaukee only paying back +145 is called the "10-cent line" or the "dime line." Thus, with equal action on a game that the underdog wins, the bookie takes home a minimum of 10 percent, though that can be higher. The payoff rate for baseball is:

<b>Favorite lists at:</b>	<b>Dog pays at:</b>
-115 through -185	favorite odds minus 10 ("10-cent line")
-200	+185
-210 through -250	favorite odds minus 20 ("20-cent line")
-260 through -300	favorite odds minus 30 ("30-cent line")

More information to consider when taking bets on baseball includes:

- In baseball, a "pick 'em" game (even) will have both sides -110.
- A favorite can be -185 but then jump to -200. Do not list favorites at -190 or -195 (or 205).
- If the favorite is higher than -300, use a run-line. I usually started a run-line if the favorite got as high as -260 or so (run-lines are explained later in this chapter).

Again, using this scale and with equal action on each team in a baseball game, the bookie will take home a minimum of 10 percent in juice and possibly a lot more. However, you will not have equal action on both teams, and therein lies one of the most important aspects to turning a profit on baseball.

More than any other sport, baseball is a game where you will know what teams your customers will bet that night before you have

even turned on the phones. Given that about 90 percent of baseball games are posted as money lines instead of point spreads or run-lines, a winning baseball wager only requires the team to win the game. The psychology of betting is such that a gambler can't bring himself to risk his money on a team that is supposed to get its ass kicked. Every single game, every single night, *all* of your customers will want to bet on the favorites; your job is to tweak the lines enough so that on the nights when the heavy favorites lose, it will cost the customer enough to make up for his winning days.

A typical night in the office during baseball season goes like this.... Joe Customer has poured over the local sports section, every inch of *USA Today*, watched intently as ESPN has run down the latest injuries, etc. After about four hours of deliberating which baseball teams to play, Joe will call you and commit himself to the difficult opinion of "give me the Yankees and the Braves for \$500 each." At that point, if you have done your job, Joe may as well have handed over his wallet and told you to take whatever you need. The bottom line is that the Braves and Yankees are clearly the best teams in baseball and have been for several years. Given that all the team has to do is win the game, the Braves and Yankees will be winning bets for the customer about 100 times apiece during the season. However, that also means that they will be losing bets for the customer about 60 times apiece during the season. At an average price of -200 each night, you can count on the \$100 player winning \$10,000 on each of them and losing \$12,000 on each of them.

*Guarantee from me to you:* Customers who only play favorites during baseball will get absolutely run over from April through the World Series.

*Guarantee from me to you:* All of your customers will play favorites during baseball season.

The point here is that when a money line is used, the customer puts on blinders and thinks only in regards to today's games. "There is *no way* that the Braves are gonna lose at home to the stinking Pirates," he tells himself, and most of the time he is right. If this were a football game, a comparable matchup would be a team like Denver

at home versus New Orleans. In this game, the Denver defensive line would have the Saints quarterback painting his fingernails and answering to the name "bitch" by half-time. No problem here, as Denver rolls 38-20. The dilemma to the bettor is when he sees the football line (a spread, not a money line) and Denver is -17. Clearly Denver is better, but will they win by more than 17? That is the decision that the caller must make. In baseball, however, all the team must do is win the game and "there is *no way* that they (good team) are gonna lose to the stinking (bad team)." Well, too bad for your customers—even the best teams will lose 60 games, and even the worst teams will win 60.

Again, when risking his hard-earned green, a gambler cannot make himself bet on a team that is supposed to lose. For this reason, you should take a look at the baseball lines each night and, for any game over about -160 or so, adjust it up according to how popular that team is with your players. In Atlanta, if the Braves came out at -180, I could list them as high as -200, and the customers would still bet Atlanta like they had already seen the final score. Keep in mind that if the customers are going to bet the heavy favorites anyway, you should make them risk as much as possible without driving them away. You do not want to start listing -200 favorites at -350, but small adjustments are in order. The upside to a slight alteration in the lines? Follow along . . .

In a typical 20-game stretch, the Yankees will go 13-7. The \$100 player will win \$1,300 on those games when the Yanks are victorious. The seven losses at an average of -200 will cost the gambler \$1,400 and give you a tidy \$100 profit. What if you had adjusted the line up a small bit each night, say from an average of -200 to an average of -215? Suddenly, your profit from one customer betting on one team has more than doubled, as the \$100 player has now lost \$1,505 on those games, and your profit from him over the three weeks is \$205.

Now, let's extend that math one step further. Your customers are not going to play just one team a night, but typically five or six. Let's give Joe the benefit of the doubt and assume he has some restraint and only plays half of the typical player, betting three games a night. Over



that same 20-game span, Joe has now lost  $\$205 \times 3$ , or  $\$615$ . "How can I make a living if he is only losing  $\$615$  to me every three weeks?" you may be thinking. Well, you don't have only one customer. Say you are just starting out and only have 20 customers. Hell, let's say you are the worst, most unprofessional, small-time bookie in town and only have 10 customers. That is  $\$6,150$  over three weeks, or roughly  $\$8,000$  a month. Do the math and see what kind of tax-free, cash profit you make with 60 or 70 customers. My last baseball season, I had 210 customers. That's why I'm 37 and retired.

*Point to take with you:* A slight adjustment in the lines will put a lot more money in your pocket. Be smart about it and before long you can hire a clerk and teach him what I just taught you. Then your afternoons will be free for golf courses and strip bars.

**The Over/Under**

Remember the line we are working with for this example? It had Milwaukee playing at Houston and was listed as

Milwaukee	8- over
Houston	-155

We have already covered the money line for the side. What you need to decide now is how you will deal the total. There are two different ways. I prefer to stay consistent along the lines of how Vegas does it, but you may choose not to.

The first option is to deal totals just like you do in a basketball game or football game. The total number of runs projected in this game is 8- (remember that the minus sign after a number indicates a half). You may choose to post the total to your customers as simply 8-, and they can wager the game will go over or under, but either way a winning bet pays  $\$100$  to  $\$100$  and a losing bet loses  $\$110$  to  $\$100$ . That is the first way to do it.

The right way to do it is to have the total followed by one of three words: *over*, *under*, or *flat*. Regardless of which of these three follows a total, all winning baseball totals will pay even money. Only

when there is a losing bet do you need intimate knowledge of the differences each of these words carry. We will start with the easy one, flat. Dealing a total as X flat is the same as dealing it like football or basketball totals. There is no difference in betting over or under. It is a straight 10 percent juice on all losing plays, while a winner still pays even money. Simple enough. The variations come into play when you start involving over and under.

In our example, the total was 8- over. That means that, according to Vegas, the total is 8-, and it is favored to go over that number. If the caller wants to bet this total will go over, he pays 20 percent on all losing wagers. If he bets 8- over to go under, he will not have to pay any juice on a losing wager. The same principles apply to if the total was listed as 8- under. When dealing totals, imagine that over has an arrow pointing up and under has an arrow pointing down. If the gambler bets with the arrow and loses, he pays double juice. If he bets against the arrow and loses, he pays none.

The idea here is that Vegas is telling you what they believe should happen in the game. In this game, the total is 8- and Vegas believes it will go over that. As a penalty for betting what should happen, the caller has to risk double juice. As a reward for betting against what should happen, the caller risks no juice. You should deal your totals this way because you will wind up making more profit. Gamblers are suckers and can't resist betting the favorite. In this game, the favorite is the over, and you will collect double juice on losing plays instead of only the standard 10 percent.

If all of your customers bet the under, then you will collect no juice, right? That shouldn't be a concern because, as stated, gamblers only bet what they believe is the "sure thing." Heck, the wise guys in Vegas are telling them what should happen with this total, so they will always make the bet that ends up costing them 20 percent instead of only 10 percent. Profit is your focus. Posting your totals this way will increase the amount of money you earn. Do it.

Do not take parlays for baseball sides or totals. It will only confuse your clerks and your customers. I promise you that the whole over-under thing will be more than most of them can han-

die. Having them try to figure the odds in baseball parlays would cause cerebrum meltdown.

Oh, yeah. There are no teasers in baseball, so don't take those either.

### **The Run Line**

Pay attention. One of the biggest baseball moneymakers is about to be covered. When a line in baseball has the favorite at -320, there is not a soul on the planet who is going to bet the underdog. We are dealing with a scenario such as the Braves vs. the Pirates. Regardless of anything else, this line starts at a minimum of Atlanta -170. But it's not just Braves vs. Pirates. This game is in Atlanta. Better make it -200. Oh, yeah. Greg Maddux is pitching for Atlanta against a rookie making his major league debut for Pittsburgh. It's now -280. Atlanta was off the day before, whereas the Pirates are coming to Atlanta for the eighth game of a 12-game road trip. Now, the game has reached Atlanta -320. These are some of the many factors that go into what lines Vegas will post. A few times a year, all of these factors will jump on a team's ass at the same time, and the only conclusion the bettor can make is "the Pirates are gonna get stomped tonight." You could post this game as Atlanta -5,000, and the gambling public would still be on the Braves like a bad rash. Whenever the lines get to about -250 or so, start considering posting the game with a run line instead of a money line.

A run line is fairly easy for you to figure and will give your customers more to think about. The more they think, the more they lose. How a run line works is that instead of having Atlanta -280 to simply win the game, you will post the line as

Pittsburgh	+1 -	+120	7 under
Atlanta	-1 -	-140	

This means that Atlanta is minus 1 and 1/2 runs and -140, while Pittsburgh gets a run and a half and is +120. Typically, there is a 20-cent split on a run line. Invariably, your callers will still load up on

the Braves. This will greatly increase your profits. Why? Just look in the paper at a preview of the night's game. You will be told what each team's record is, what the record on grass is versus on Astroturf, how they fare against left-handers, etc., as well as the team's record in one-run games. The Braves and the Yankees (and Cleveland in a good year) may win 100 games, but 35 of those may be one-run victories. By posting a run line, you have wiped out over a third of those victories. Run lines are very good for your business. There is, however, an even better way to work the run line.

Say Atlanta is a -300 favorite. You may want to make the game Atlanta -1 and -160, while Pittsburgh is +1 and +140. This will turn a profit for you, but your winning percentage versus that of the customers will climb even higher if you post a "split line." A split line will look something like this:

Pittsburgh	+1-	+160
Atlanta	-2	-160

This doesn't look much different, but it can have a large impact on your bottom line. In this scenario, with a game the Braves win by two runs, all of the Atlanta money would only tie, while all of the Pittsburgh money would lose. A slightly different way to write it would be like this:

Pittsburgh	+1	+160
Atlanta	-1-	-160

The same scenario exists here, but let's say the Braves only win by one run. All of the Atlanta money loses, while all of the Pittsburgh money only ties. Posting a run line like this should be illegal (actually, everything we are talking about is illegal) and is one of the worst possible bets your customers can make, but they can't get enough of them. If all you did was post run lines for huge favorites and didn't even put the other games on the board, it would be worth your time to stay open for baseball season.

A couple of final pointers about dealing baseball: first, a rough guideline for changing a money line to a run line is that a half run equals about -50. If you take off a run and a half, take off roughly -150 from the favorite. This varies, but -50 per half is pretty safe. Also, you are the house, and the house advantage is either in the odds or in the runs, *not* both. If you are going to take the half-run advantage, the + and - numbers should be the same. If the runs coming off the favorite and going to the dog are the same, you take your advantage in a 20-cent difference between the + and -.

### **Final Point (Live by This Rule)**

Your customers are free to call in and bet on any baseball team they want. They cannot, however, bet on a specific pitcher. Every morning, the probable starting pitchers are listed in the paper and on the Internet and talked about on the sports call-in shows. But your customers must understand that they are only probable pitchers and nothing more. You will occasionally run into a caller who only gambles with you once every five days because Roger Clemens only pitches once every five days. If Joe the Customer calls in his \$500 on the Yankees, he has the Yankees, regardless of whether Clemens actually starts that night or whether he missed the team bus and is having to walk to the stadium. There will be a time when you answer the phone and encounter a customer thinking his bet last night was a no-play because he bet on St. Louis and the scheduled pitcher for St. Louis didn't start. The first time you take a baseball bet from a caller, make sure he (or she) understands that the bet is on the team and not on any pitcher. Only say it once, but say it up front and avoid a hassle later.

## **HOCKEY**

Hockey is the sport most dependent on geography in regard to how much action you will write. Understand that all bookies in every part of the country will from time to time have customers requesting

hockey lines, but the farther north you are located, the more likely you will have to cater to customers wanting action on hockey every night. A bookie friend of mine left Savannah, Georgia, after a divorce and, seeking to disappear from his wife's attorney (and the IRS), landed in Bloomington, Indiana. He called me one night asking if I knew where he could get lines on college hockey. Apparently, those folks in Indiana are right serious about their ice. Most likely, however, if you are not in a northern metropolitan area, you will only have a few transplants from Philadelphia or Boston or some similarly dreadful place asking for hockey. Even though most of your customers won't be begging for hockey lines, you will need to know the most profitable ways to offer the lines.

*Pay attention*, as this will start off fairly simple but could become confusing if you aren't familiar with betting on hockey. If you understand the way baseball odds work, you are halfway to understanding hockey.

### The Money Line

This works exactly like the money lines we discussed earlier in baseball. You will have a line such as

Boston	-145
Tampa Bay	+125 (5 1/2 under)

In this scenario, Boston is visiting the Tampa Bay Lightning and is a -145 favorite (betting the favorite means the customer must risk \$145 to win \$100). Tampa Bay is the underdog, and, for betting \$100 on the home team, the customer could win \$125. The split in hockey is most often a bit larger than in baseball, however, as the Yankees being a -145 favorite would pay the underdog +135. Just like in baseball, as the odds get higher, the split becomes larger. A -220 favorite, for example, will only pay back approximately +180 (in baseball, the underdog to a -220 favorite will collect +200).

**The Puck Line**

Sometimes called the "goal line," this is a betting line for hockey that will most often prevent ties from being a no-play as far as the bookie is concerned. As my old boss Curtis used to say, "The next best thing to winning is losing," meaning that a bet that neither wins nor loses is just a waste of time. A typical season for a hockey team in the NHL will include anywhere from 15 to 20 ties. If you always just gave out the money line, you would wind up with almost 25 percent of your hockey action being a no-play. For this reason, I suggest you use the puck line as often as possible (it is similar to the run line in baseball). You may have a hockey line that looks like this

Boston	-1/2
Tampa Bay	+1/2 (5 1/2 under)

This betting line makes you forfeit a half goal if you bet the favorite, while giving the underdog the same half goal. In this scenario, whichever side is the winning side would only pay out +100 (even money), while the losing side is only responsible for the amount of the bet plus the 10-percent juice (-110). If Boston were a -145 on the money line, this puck line is very likely. Understand that this type of puck line (both sides -110) is usually only used on slight favorites. However, if the money line had Boston as a much bigger favorite, -280 for example (with Tampa paying +220), then only having them favored by a half goal wouldn't be enough. At that point you may use what is called a . . .

**Split Line**

A split line combines the money line and the puck line and can mean two things, either a split (a difference) in the goals minus or plus each team or a split in the odds minus or plus for each team. Remember, it is either one or the other. If the house advantage is a split in goals, you pay out the same. If the house advantage is in the odds, you give and take the same goals. A couple of examples should help.

If we had this same game being played and Boston was -280, you will most likely want to use a split line. It could be either . . .

Boston	-1 1/2	-120
Tampa Bay	+1 1/2	+100 (5 1/2 under)

or

Boston	-1 1/2	-120
Tampa Bay	+1	+120 (5 1/2 under)

In the first example, since both teams either get or give 1 1/2 goals, the house advantage is built into the odds. In the second example, the odds are the same so the house advantage is built into the goals.

Let's say the game ends with Boston winning 3-2. If you have given the first type of split line and a customer had bet \$100 on Boston, he would have lost the bet and owed \$120. Another customer betting on Tampa Bay would have won the wager but only gotten paid \$100, a \$20 profit for you. In the second scenario, however, figure that same score for the same bets. How much profit do you make there? The reason I favor the second way of posting split lines (and run lines for baseball) is because in the second example, the \$100 bet on Boston would have lost and paid me \$120, while the Tampa Bay bet would have only tied and not paid the customer anything. In this way, you can actually win all the bets your customers place on the favorite, while all the action on the underdog merely ties. It won't always work out like this, but think of how many hockey games (or baseball games) you have seen that are decided by one run. Posting this type of split line can be very profitable for your business, and remember that the reason we are doing this is to make a tax-free, cash profit.

### The Total

Just as in most other team sports, in hockey the customer can play the side or the total. In this case, the total refers to the total num-



ber of goals both teams combine to score. Similar to baseball, the total in hockey will at times be a number (5 1/2) followed by a word (either *over* or *under*). In our example the line was as follows:

Boston	-1 1/2	-120
Tampa Bay	+1	+120 (5 1/2 under)

In this game the projected number of goals scored by both teams is 5 1/2 and, according to the people who make the lines for hockey, it is favored to go under that total. A person who bets that the total will do what it is favored to do must risk 20 percent juice (-120) instead of the normal 10 percent (-110). The score in this game was 3-2, and a \$100 bet on the under would pay the customer \$100. If the customer had called to bet "\$100 on the Boston over," you would have read back, "Boston over the 5 1/2 under for \$100."

This play would have lost. Since the caller bet against what was supposed to happen, there is no juice attached to his losing bet, and he only owes the amount of his wager (\$100). What if the score in this game had been 4-2 instead? The \$100 on the under would lose the customer \$120, while the bet on the over would win the customer \$100.

When dealing with totals in hockey or baseball think of the over or under following the number as an arrow. If the customer bets with the arrow and loses, it is double juice (20 percent). If the customer bets against the arrow and loses, it is no juice. A winning bet on a total involving an arrow pays even money. Some totals in hockey will not involve an arrow and will simply be 5 1/2 or 5 or whatever. In these cases, betting either way pays even money (on a winning bet) and loses -110 (on a losing bet).

### Series Price

During hockey season, one of the most profitable ways for you to take your customers' money is to allow them to bet which team will win the various playoff series. In the National Hockey League, 16 teams make the playoffs, and for each of the playoff series, from the first round straight through to the Stanley Cup, there will be a

betting line for each of the teams involved to win that series. You might see a playoff series price such as

Boston	-270
Tampa Bay	+225

This scenario is not likely, as Tampa Bay is possibly the worst franchise in the history of organized sports and has no hope of making the playoffs for the next several decades, but if the Lightning were to make the playoffs, this is a possible line. Keep in mind that on a series bet, it doesn't matter what the scores of the individual games are or how many games it takes one team to win that series. Winning the series is all it takes to win the bet. That is not true, however, if there is a tremendous favorite (usually for an early round series) and you choose to post a "sweep price."

### Sweep Price

The sweep price is an option you may choose for certain playoff series. If Boston finishes the regular season 60-10-10 and Montreal limps into the playoffs with a 30-30-20 record, there is almost no chance of the Canadiens winning that series. Winning a game or even two games is possible but still not even likely. The series price for that first-round matchup would probably have Boston at about -550, while Montreal pays back +400. If you post that series price, every customer on your paysheet who owes you money will attempt to get out the hole by betting whatever they owe on Boston to win that series. Upsets of this magnitude happen in individual games, but almost never in a best of five or seven series. Posting a sweep price is a way of making more profit (our goal), while protecting yourself against huge loses toward the end of a season. Instead of making the series price . . .

Boston	-550
Montreal	+400

. .. and getting covered up in action on Boston to merely win the series, you will want to post a sweep price that will require Boston to advance to the next round without losing any games in that series. The thinking on the part of your customers is, "Well Boston is going to win the series, but Montreal can win at least one, can't they?" and you will begin taking more action on the underdog. The sweep price would probably be something like Boston -240, with Montreal paying +200 to win even one game in the series. Posting a sweep price instead of a series price will be very profitable for you in that it will allow you to have the odds on your side even if the side you are pulling against wins. Remember that for every winning \$100 bet on Montreal at the sweep price, you only pay out \$200. For every losing \$100 on the other side, you collect \$240.

In hockey, as with all sports, your customers will always be much more prone to bet the favorites, so be prepared to adjust the lines accordingly. More about that can be found in Chapter 6.

## BOXING

Boxing will be one of the easiest sports on which to take action, as there are only a few possible wagers. Most of your customers will only want to bet on boxing two or three days a year (for the big Pay Per View events), and, if you do it correctly, those days can be very profitable for you.

The first guideline for taking action on boxing is to make the betting number available to your customers. Most bookies will only give out the betting line if a customer specifically requests it. Just like all other sports, the bookie makes money on boxing, so make sure your customers know that you will be accepting action on the bout. With that in mind, we will discuss the three major types of plays your customers will want.

### Winner

As simple as it sounds, this is where the customer bets on which boxer will be declared the winner. The betting line in boxing is simi-

lar to that in baseball in that the gambler lays odds to bet the favorite or takes odds with the underdog. The 1999 Evander Holifield-Lennox Lewis championship bout had the following odds:

Holifield	-170
Lewis	+150 (7 1/2)

What this meant is that the bettor had to risk \$ 170 for every \$ 100 he wanted to win on Holifield. By betting on Lewis, the customer was trying to win \$150 for only risking \$100. Remember, just like in baseball, these odds are based on \$100 units. In the fight above, the two boxers fought the entire 12 rounds and the bout was declared a draw. That means all money bet on which boxer would win was returned to the customer. As most of your action is simply taken over the phone and your players don't have to post the money in advance, it's like they never called at all. If Lewis had been declared the winner, a \$1,000 bet (a dime) on Holifield would have cost the gambler \$ 1,700. The same \$1,000 bet on Lewis would have won the gambler \$1,500.

The sports service that provides your odds will have betting lines for all major bouts, and boxing is treated in a way similar to baseball, in that the higher the number for the favorite, the greater the split between that number and what the underdog pays back.

In one Oscar De La Hoya fight, the champion was a -450 favorite, while his opponent only paid back +380. You will only take action on a boxing match the night of the bout. The odds will usually be set up to three months in advance, and if anything happens that would dramatically change the betting line (e.g., a boxer is badly cut during sparring, a positive drug test), the fight may be canceled. However, be very careful to pay attention to the odds on the day of the fight. Rarely will a boxing match be canceled the day of the event, but the odds can shift suddenly because of mild illness, stomach discomfort resulting from efforts to make weight, etc. These things are not severe enough to cancel a bout, but they can change the betting line drastically, and your sharper customers will know about them.

In 1996, a preliminary bout on the Showtime cable network had nearly been canceled because of a death in the family of one of the boxers. He was persuaded to fight anyway and wound up quitting after three rounds. As of 9 **A.M.** the day of the fight, that boxer was a -240 favorite. By the time he stepped into the ring, the odds were down to pick 'em (a pick 'em in boxing has both fighters -120). Many bookies I know were still offering the underdog (and eventual winner) at +180.

Two things would have prevented the financial bath many bookies took that night: paying a few dollars extra to have one of the better line providers (again, SportsTracker by Jim Feist is probably the best) and having clerks competent enough to pay attention to fluctuating lines.

As in all sports, most of your callers will want to bet the favorite, so be prepared to adjust the line accordingly as you take action that night.

### **Over/Under**

The number in parentheses after the underdog's odds is the over/under for the rounds of the fight. In this case, the over/under for rounds fought is 7 1/2. The vigorish for a total (total rounds) in boxing is -110 both ways. Occasionally you will see something like 7 1/2 over, meaning that the total is 7 1/2, and it is favored to go over that. In that case, treat it like baseball totals and charge -120 for a bet on the over, while the under would receive +100. As the Holifield-Lewis fight went the full 12 rounds, the over would have been the winning play.

Some customers are confused about it being 7 and 1/2 rounds. It is just like it sounds: 7 full rounds and then half of the next round (1:30). The announcer in the ring and any news account of a fight will always provide the ending time of a fight, so there is never any question as to when a fight was actually over. "The winner by TKO at 1:26 of the 8th round, and still champion of the world" is most likely what you will hear. In this case, 1:26 of the 8th round is under 7 1/2, so the winning bet in that scenario is under.

There are some bookies who don't like giving a total for a boxing match, but you will make much more profit from the total than you will the side. Make sure you offer the total, and, similar to slightly adjusting the odds on who will win the fight, you may also need to change the line a bit for the over/under. When you change it for this, however, it wouldn't be changing from 7 1/2 to 8, but most likely from 7 1/2 to 7 1/2 over. If it has already started at 7 1/2 over, you may want to go to the next highest number, but then you would list it as 8 under.

### **Will There Be a Knockout?**

Continuing in the "it's just like it sounds" vein, this is simply a bet on whether the fight will end by knockout. Either a technical knockout (TKO) or actual knockout counts for the purpose of betting. The number fluctuates depending on how evenly matched the fighters are and how prone to dishing out or taking knockouts a particular fighter is. If the favorite is -400, the knockout line should be somewhere around -250 or so.

### **Extra Stuff about Boxing**

While you will want to offer boxing to all your customers, be very conscious of a player who is already down a good bit and tries to get out of the hole by placing a huge bet on a huge favorite. Many times I have told a customer that I will take whatever amount he wishes to bet, but he has to "post" the money (give it to me in advance). You always want to do this in a friendly manner, as your goal is not to drive away customers, but merely to make sure none of them get buried to the point that bad things happen.

Remember the "bad things"? An example of a bad thing would be a customer being so far down that he only sees two ways out: telling you to "go screw—I'm not paying you anything" (bad), or putting some change in a pay phone and calling the police (*realllllly bad*).

Let the customer know that you are only making sure he knows that all money wagered "is expected to be paid, just like we pay you when you are up." Sometimes I have told a customer that "if you lose

this, you will be down \$XX,XXX. You will be OK with that much?" Use similar wording to let a customer know that you are NOT dealing in monopoly money here. You may want to tell him the figure and then offer to let him call you back if he decides he wants to make the bet. Remember, the bottom line here is that you are in this to make a profit, and if a customer is completely wrung out, you most likely won't collect anything. Playing a tremendous favorite in boxing is a very popular way for many losing customers to get out of the hole they have dug.

For your customers of better means, you may want to host a boxing party. Most of the marquee bouts are on Pay Per View at about \$49.95 apiece, and hosting a party is one way to make it easier for your well-heeled customers to get action on the fight. For the first Tyson-Holifield match, I rented the back room at a sports bar and invited 30 or so of the highest rollers on my paysheet. The room cost me \$1,500, and for that price my guests and I all got to view the fight on a 51-inch Sony while enjoying an open bar and all the wings and potato skins we cared for. It cost me about \$50 per guest, and I took almost \$25,000 in action in the hour leading up to the bout.

The point here is that wealthy men who also happen to watch sports like being treated special. They like to play the "you are catering to me" game, and I can play that game. I was out \$1,500 for the room and spent another \$500 on two private servers and a security officer. I left that night with \$9,000 profit, paying and collecting on the spot. Private functions like this are things that, win or lose, endear your wealthier customers to you. Yes, I said "win or lose." The feeling of "I have money to burn and don't mind spending it" is a powerful one to many men. Since displaying their penis is not acceptable at parties (at least not at the ones I host), most rely on the size of their bankroll as evidence of their manhood. I had one customer who I would almost swear preferred to lose, as he then had the chance to pull out the \$5,000 or so in cash he had on him and begin peeling off hundreds to pay his debt in a very loud and very public way (that's why I had the security guard present).

Host these parties and enjoy yourself while making a huge cash profit for almost no work.

## HORSE RACING

Taking action for horse racing is something that will occur only four times a year for most of you. The three races for the Triple Crown (the Kentucky Derby, the Preakness, and the Belmont Stakes), as well as the Breeder's Cup, are the events that will most concern you. The Derby is always the first Saturday of May, followed in two-week intervals by the second and third installments in the Triple Crown. The Breeder's Cup comes on a Saturday in the fall, toward the end of the racing season.

There are almost limitless wagers a gambler can make at a horse track, but for the Derby, Preakness, and Belmont, you need only concern yourself with a few that make up 99 percent of what most folks will want to play. The Breeder's Cup will require slightly more, but you should be able to handle it. For the purposes of our examples here, we will use the horses and results from the 1999 Kentucky Derby. First, the basics . . .

For all sports you should take a minimum bet of \$50, with \$50 increases between each bet. It may seem like pocket change, but only a few of your customers will play that small and the ones who do will soon be playing more as they begin to lose. For horse racing, however, you should accept \$10, \$20, and \$25 bets as well. While this will make for a sizable pain in your ass, remember that it is only for a few events a year, and the return on your effort will make it well worth the sweat.

Another important thing to remember is that you should tell your customers you pay "track odds." That is, you pay the same for winning bets that the track pays for winning bets. The track does not determine the final odds for the horses until the betting window has closed. The odds that the track will pay are based on the amount of money wagered on each of the horses. If a race has 14 horses, each of the 14 will start the race with different amounts bet on it. The



more the horse has, the lower the odds, and vice versa. For the horses that finish in the top three, odds will be posted immediately following the race.

The confusion comes in that most of your customers will be unfamiliar with how "track odds" pay. When the track odds are announced as "Charismatic wins and pays \$12.20 to win, \$8.40 to place, and \$5.80 to show," many of your callers will think that a \$100 bet on Charismatic to win will pay them \$1,220 (their \$100 wager times 12.2). While the pony will pay handsomely, he ain't that handsome.

The first thing your customers must know about track odds is that they are based on a two-dollar bet that the gambler has already paid for at the window. That means that the "\$12.20 to win" and so on is the window at the track handing back \$12.20 on a \$2 winning ticket. But the gambler must remember that \$2 of that \$12.20 is the \$2 that he paid at the window before the race started, so the profit is only \$10.20. Also, the \$10.20 is based on a \$2 bet; therefore, a \$1 bet pays only half of that, or \$5.10. Thus, the gambler is paid the amount of his wager times 5.1. That is still a nice payout, but to the gambler who is expecting \$1,220, \$510 may seem a bit slight.

A review of the steps to go through when turning track odds into payouts: track odds minus 2 divided by 1/2. In this case, the track odds for a \$100 bet to win were \$12.20. You must first subtract \$2 (the money that the gambler posted in advance at the track but didn't post in advance with you) and then divide in half (because you will multiply the bet times each dollar, and the track multiplies it based on two dollars).

Now, we can discuss some of the specific bets your customers will want to make.

### **Straight Bets**

For any horse race the simplest of bets, and the one most often played by gamblers, is the straight bet. This is the customer saying, "I want to bet that horse X will finish in Y position." The fill-ins for X can be any horse racing that day, and the Y will be first, second, or third (win, place, or show). For the Derby, the Preakness, and the

Belmont, there is only one race to be bet on. For the Breeder's Cup, there are a series of races, so the gambler will have to tell you in what race his horse is entered.

### ***Win***

"Give me \$100 on Charismatic to win" is one \$100 bet. This means that Charismatic must win the race to pay anything back. Any finish besides first means the bet loses. There is no juice on losing horse wagers, so the loss is the amount of the bet.

### ***Place***

"I need \$100 on Charismatic to place" is one \$100 bet. If Charismatic finishes first or second, the bet wins. However, regardless of whether he wins or places, Charismatic will only pay the second-place money on a place bet. Betting on a horse to place is the same as saying, "I want Charismatic to win or place for \$100."

### ***Show***

"Charismatic to show" is still just one \$100 bet. This means that if he finishes anywhere in the top three, the gambler gets paid, though he will only collect on the show price, regardless of where in the top three Charismatic finishes.

We will put some payoff numbers to this example to make sure you know how this works. Once again, the winning odds for Charismatic were \$12.20, \$8.40, and \$5.80.

If the customer bet \$100 on the horse to win, which Charismatic did, the \$100 would pay \$510, as we discussed earlier in the chapter.

If the customer bet \$100 on a second-place finish, the \$100 would pay back \$320. That would be \$8.40 minus \$2 (\$6.40), divided by 1/2 (\$3.20). Since the customer bet \$100, that equals \$320. If he had wagered only \$20, the payoff would be \$64 (\$20 x 3.2).

If the customer had bet Charismatic to show, the \$100 would pay back \$190. You can do the math and figure it out.

The horses that finish second and third (place and show) will

also have their track odds posted at the conclusion of the race. The math works the same way. Understand that there will be times that a customer bets the favorite in a certain race and the favorite finishes third, for example, and a \$20 bet on the horse to show will only pay back \$16 or \$19 or a similar amount. The customer who doesn't fully understand track odds will wonder how a winning bet doesn't even return the amount of the wager. Be patient and explain it.

Occasionally your callers will ask for "\$100 on Charismatic to win, place, or show." That is the same as asking for \$100 to show. "To win or place" is the same as to place. It is very important to remember that a bet to "show" or to "win, place, or show" is only one bet and that bet pays off at the lowest amount possible. If the caller wanted Charismatic to "win, place, or show," the horse would only pay off the show price. By hedging his bet and wanting to collect on a top-three finish, the gambler is forfeiting the chance of a win payoff or place payoff. Betting a horse "\$100 to win, place, *or* show" is very different from betting the same horse "\$100 to win, place, *and* show." Literally, the gambler is telling you he wants "\$100 on the horse to win, \$100 to place, and \$100 to show." A bet to "win, place, or show" is only one bet. A bet to "win, place, and show" is three bets. Make sure your customers understand what they are asking for. Likewise, "\$100 across the board" is the same as to "win, place, and show"; \$100 (or any other amount) across the board will be three \$100 bets.

### **Exacta**

In this wager, your customer can pick which two horses will finish first and second in that order and win a fairly large amount if he is lucky. The exacta may pay something like \$28.20 or a similar figure, but whatever the payout for the exacta is, it will be listed along with the track odds. There is only one winning exacta per race, and the winning odds will be given.

Use the same formula we detailed earlier to figure the actual winnings. A \$100 exacta paying \$28.20 would net the bettor \$1,310. Do the math and make sure this is what you come up with. If you are having trouble getting it to come out right, go to a pool hall and ask

the oldest, crabbiest-looking man in the place if he can help you. He will probably be wearing a hat and a short-sleeved dress shirt. All pool halls have one of him, and he knows horses. If there is no pool hall around you, go back and reread the first part of the chapter until you understand how to do it.

### **Trifecta**

The trifecta requires your customer to pick the first three horses in the order they finish. Almost any time a customer calls to bet a trifecta, you could just as well mark him as a loser for whatever amount he bet, because he ain't gonna win it. Most likely you won't ever need to grade a winning trifecta, but if you do, it works the same as the previous bets. The track odds given at the conclusion of the race will list the payout for the winning trifecta (\$51.20 or \$62.60 or whatever), and the math is the same as for the straights and the exactas.

### **Breeder's Cup**

We spoke earlier about the Breeder's Cup being a bit different from the other three races. What sets it apart is that the Breeder's Cup is actually an entire afternoon of racing, about eight different races altogether. They are at the same track and take place about 20 minutes apart. Some of your customers may want a daily double or perfecta or similar long-shot bet. Just take the standard action.

You won't lose any customers by only taking regular bets. Most bookies won't even let their callers bet horse racing, and your customers know it. They will be grateful to you for being open on the four marquee days for the sport. I was going to say they are grateful for you allowing them four more opportunities to give you their money, but that would be too smug (but it's true).

### **GOLF**

Similar to boxing matches, golf tournaments are events on which you will only take action a few times a year. While you won't be overrun by customers clamoring to bet on golf, don't underestimate

the value of posting sharp lines for the sport, as it can be a very profitable facet of your business. The Jeckyl and Hyde of golf is that, while very few of your customers will want to bet on it, those who do wager on the sport like to wager a lot of money.

Go back and reread the introduction of this book. There we established that the more money your customers wager, the more profit you make. Further review of the introduction will remind you of our opinion of profit (we like profit). For that reason, it is important that you deal golf correctly and adjust the lines intelligently. Doing so will guarantee that you make money on the sport.

**Odds to Win**

The most basic wager your customers will want is a straight bet on a particular golfer to win that weekend's tournament. There may be as many as 90 or 95 golfers entered in the tournament, and there will be lines available for about half of those. The Stardust is especially good with its golf numbers, so try to use the lines it posts. If the Stardust is not available, the Mirage is an acceptable alternative. What you will see is a list of 40 or so of the top names in the sport followed by their odds to win. An example taken from the 1999 Masters Tournament in Augusta, Georgia:

<b>Player</b>	<b>Updated 4-7-99</b>
David Duval	3-1
Tiger Woods	4-1
Davis Love III	7-1
Justin Leonard	10-1
Jim Furyk	12-1
Mark O'Meara	15-1
Ernie Els	15-1
Vijay Singh	18-1
Greg Norman	20-1
Colin Montgomerie	20-1

These will be followed by other groupings of four or five golfers, with odds provided alongside each of the players. Odds to win are as simple as it sounds. If a customer thinks Justin Leonard will win the Masters and bets \$100, that customer will win \$1,000 if Leonard takes home the green jacket. Any losing bet at X-1 will only cost the customer the amount of the wager. After the listings of the top 40 to 45 golfers, the last bet listed under "odds to win" will be a "field" bet. That is, the customer can bet on any one of the golfers listed and get the posted odds. If he chooses to "bet the field," he would get all the rest of the golfers entered in the tournament, but not listed specifically under "odds to win." That means that if any one of the remaining 40 golfers (approximately) were to win the tournament, the customer would win his bet.

Posted odds for the field bet are typically 8-1 or 10-1 or so. While the customer betting the field does get the benefit of having almost half of the golfers, the odds are not extremely favorable. Also, the chances of one of the players ranked that low actually winning the tournament is almost nonexistent. If these players finish second or third or anywhere else besides first, the bettor gets nothing.

### Groupings

You may have been asking yourself, "Why are there spaces between every four or five golfers in the 'odds to win' listing?" Well, even if you weren't asking yourself that, I am going to explain it. A popular bet among those who wager on golf is a bet on "groupings." In our list of Masters entrants, we had the first grouping of Duval through Furyk and the second grouping of O'Meara through Montgomerie. Though we only listed the first two, there were six more groupings in the entire list. What these divisions provide the bookie is a guide to which golfers your customers can include in "group bets."

In a group bet, the odds are the first golfer in the group is -200 vs. the others, while the remaining golfers in that group are +150 vs. the first golfer. We will use the first group in our example.

The customer can bet Duval to finish higher than any or all of the other golfers in the first group, at odds of -200. The caller may

say, "Give me \$500 on Duval in a group bet against Leonard and Furyk." That means that he has two separate bets for \$500 apiece. The first wager is \$500 that Duval will finish ahead of Leonard at -200 odds, and the second, identical wager is that Duval will finish ahead of Furyk.

None of the golfers involved in group bets need to win or finish second or anywhere in the top 50 for a customer to win or lose a group bet. A group bet is simply a wager that golfer A will finish with a lower score than golfer B, regardless of what anyone else in the tournament does. A golfer not making the cut automatically loses a groupings bet vs. a golfer that does make the cut. If both miss the cut, the two-day scores are used to determine winners and losers.

If the caller wanted "Tiger in a \$500 group bet vs. Duval," he would be getting Woods +150 in a bet on which golfer, Woods or Duval, would finish with a lower score. "Duval vs. the group for \$1,000" gives the customer four separate \$1,000 bets (at -200) of Duval vs. Woods, Duval vs. Love, etc.

A groupings bet is one of the worst possible wagers a customer can make, as the house advantage is extremely high (the customer is risking \$200 for every \$150 he may win). This seems to matter little, however, as those who gamble on golf absolutely love groupings bets. You will do very well taking this type of wager. If the customer wants to bet individual scores of golfers in different groupings, he may want a list of the available "matchups."

### Matchups

Matchups are usually for golfers not as close to one another in ability as the players in groupings are. A matchup number is given for two golfers so that customers can bet, for instance, two former Georgia Tech players against each other in Duval vs. Stewart Cink. In this case the matchup numbers would probably be something like

Duval	-480
Cink	+350

Because Duval and Cink are not closely comparable in ability, these two would obviously not appear in a grouping together. A matchup bet, however, allows customers to wager one Yellow Jacket against another. There are matchups based on school, nationality, past champions of that particular tournament, etc., all usually pitting golfers from different groupings against each other.

There may also be matchup bets of players in the same groupings, but not against the first golfer of that particular group. For instance, using our first grouping again, some customers may want to bet Woods against Love and a matchup for that would probably have Woods favored -140, Love +120. You will make a pile letting your callers play the matchups, as the house advantage is again very much in your favor.

### Exotics

Exotics are specialty bets that customers love playing because of the variety of wagers available. An example of a popular exotic would be the following:

#### **"Will David Duval Finish in the Top Seven?"**

Yes-130

No +120

Another may let the customer wager on any of the following:

#### **Lowest Round of the Tournament**

Over 65.5 +110

Under 65.5 -130

#### **Winning Score for the 1999 Masters**

Over 278.5 +100 (even money)

Under 278.5 -120

One of the popular ones from 1999's tournament was . . .



**"Will Woods or Duval Win the Masters?"**

Yes	+280
No	-350

In the last exotic, the customer can risk \$350 to win \$100 that, of the 95 golfers entered in the tournament, any one of them except Woods or Duval will win. The bookie would get Woods and Duval; the gambler would get the other 93. Going the other way, the customer could have Woods and Duval, while the bookie got everyone else.

Yet again, the reason you make a bundle dealing golf is in the house advantage. Whereas the customer had to risk \$350 to win \$100 on one side of the bet, he can only win \$280 taking the other side, a \$70 profit for the house on every \$100 bet. That's pretty damn steep. Fortunately, most of your customers never realize how high the house advantage is and simply continue to give you their money at every opportunity.

## **SOCCER**

Taking action on soccer is extremely easy but not something you will be asked to do very often. Most likely, the only time your customers will want to wager on the sport will be during the World Cup, an international tournament held every two years, or it might be every four. I should go ahead and say that I'm not incredibly knowledgeable about soccer and don't really wish to be. I think watching soccer could be used as therapy for terminal insomniacs, and it's a communist sport, to boot.

Anyway, back to the World Cup. It is a tournament that countries must qualify for by defeating other countries in preliminary rounds, and, by winning there, the country can advance to the World Cup. I believe 16 teams advance, divided into four groups of four countries each. During the World Cup, some of your customers may want to bet on the games, and, because of that, we will cover the guidelines you should use when writing that action.

Soccer is bet using a money line, just like in baseball. A slight difference is that the standard split in the odds is 20 cents, not 10. Whereas in baseball, you may see a 10-cent line on a fairly evenly matched game, such as . . .

Pittsburgh	+130	9 over
St. Louis	-140	

. . . what you will see as the norm in soccer is a 20-cent line:

Italy	+120
Brazil	-140

The chart in the baseball chapter showing the split between favorites and underdogs should be referred to, but for a soccer match remember to double the difference between the two. Also, for a soccer game that is a pick 'em, both sides are minus -120. The one redeeming quality of soccer betting is that there is never a total listed. For most of the matches it would probably be something such as "1 - under," so be thankful you don't have to watch these snore-a-thons just because some bubba thought it would be funny to take the Iran-Portugal game under.

Besides the World Cup, there are a couple of professional leagues in the United States, but no odds are posted, nor action taken, on these games. This is because teams in these leagues routinely "reorganize," change cities, or simply lock their doors and declare bankruptcy with alarming regularity, sometimes on the day of games. There is Major League Soccer (MLS), with teams scattered across the country. They actually have a television contract with ESPN, but any league where more than half the teams' mascots are singular can't be trusted. There is also something called the A-League, but I think they pulled a "USFL" and "suspended operations." Anyone hoping to see A-League soccer in your town any time soon should remember that the USFL "suspended operations" in 1986.

## NASCAR

The more likely your customers are to eat grits, the more likely they will be asking you for betting numbers for "Rusty" or "Dale" or any of the other superstars of NASCAR. Writing the action for Winston Cup races is fairly simple, and you will make a profit on it. Anything that provides you with \$\$ is worth your effort, so make sure you take the action correctly and professionally.

### Odds

For each race in the NASCAR season, you will take mainly two types of action. The first of these will be each of the 40 or so drivers and the odds at which Vegas has listed them. Actually, only about 25 of the individual drivers will have odds, with the remainder of the drivers for that weekend included in the "field." Typical odds will resemble what we saw in the chapter on golf, though you are never likely to see anyone with a name like Davis Love III behind the wheel of the #49 car or the Wal-Mart car or any other car that races on the circuit. Odds from a recent race were . . .

Jeff Gordon	3-1
Rusty Wallace	5-1
Mark Martin	5-1
Dale Earnhardt	8-1

. . . through about the 25th driver (in this case, Bill Elliott), and the odds for him (40-1). The last bet listed will be the "field," meaning the customer would get the remaining, unlisted drivers with odds usually about 7-1 or 8-1. A customer wanting to wager on his favorite driver is the NASCAR bet you will take most often. The other type will involve matchups.

### Matchups

These wagers allow the customer several head-to-head bets involving two drivers in that day's race. The above race had the following matchup:

Martin	-140
Earnhardt	+120

First of all, notice that NASCAR matchup wagers use a 20-cent line. Also, make sure your customers understand that the bet here is between Mark Martin and Dale Earnhardt and where they will finish the race compared to each other, independent of whatever the other 43 drivers do. Hell, neither one of them even has to finish the race for the bet to win or lose.

If the customer wants "Dale against Mark for a hunnert," the bet is valid regardless of what happens after the gentlemen have started their engines. If Mark Martin hits the wall in turn 4 of lap 39 and goes out of the race, he could still be a winner in the matchup bet if Earnhardt's engine blew and put him out in lap 12.

"Naw, that don't count, dammit!" is what JoeBob will be saying the next day. Make sure that before the race, he understands that the bet is on as long as both drivers start.

## "FUTURES"

The heading of "futures" refers to a large collection of wagers your customer can make on events that won't be decided within the next few days or possibly even the next few months. You will make an inordinate amount of profit with these bets if for no other reason than any single futures wager will contain a large number of losing bets and only one winning bet.

A "futures bet" is simply a bet on something that will happen in the future. In spring training, the gambler may wish to bet on which National League team he thinks will win the pennant or even the World Series. A football fan may decide in August that he believes the Seattle Seahawks will win the AFC West that season. If your customers believe they are particularly astute concerning golf, they may want to wager whether Tiger Woods will win one of the four major tournaments this year. Essentially, these are bets that allow the gambler to forecast what he believes will happen during and after a particular season and to back up that belief with his cash.

What makes it extremely difficult to win these bets is that, while Joe Customer may *realllly* like the Braves' chances in the World Series, there will be only one team that makes that a winning bet and 29 that make it a loser. Also, as always, your customers will only want to bet on the favorites in futures bets, and the odds are so incredibly stacked against the favorites that a huge amount of money must be put up in order to win a relatively small sum. That is a rough outline of futures; now the details. . . .

**Baseball**

As mentioned, baseball futures allow your customers to bet during spring training which team they think will win a pennant or the World Series or even just the division. Odds for the 1999 baseball season included futures such as . . .

**Win National League Pennant**

Atlanta	2-1
New York Mets	4-1
Houston Astros	6-1

... all the way down to the Florida Marlins at 500-1.

Other futures let the customer pick an over/under for total wins for each team in baseball (straight 10 percent juice on losers; winners pay even money). The Braves' total wins were projected to be 98 1/2, while the Arizona Diamondbacks were posted at 83. Your customers also could wager on which player would lead the major leagues in home runs (e.g., Mark McGwire 6-5, Sammy Sosa 3-1) or which pitcher would be the first to win 20 games this season. The point here is that there are *plenty* of different ways for the callers to lose their money to you during baseball season.

**Football**

All the futures bets we discussed in baseball are available in similar fashion for football. Before the 1999 NFL season began, the

range of wagers went from the very likely (Denver to win the Super Bowl? 2-1) to the "it'll be a cold day in hell" bets (Philadelphia to win the Super Bowl, 400-1). Football futures are very popular with bettors. Make sure your best customers know you take action on these plays.

Baseball and football futures should make up about 95 percent of all bets of this type that your customers may want to play. Hockey, basketball (college and pro), boxing, golf, and any other type of sport all have futures bets available, but most of your action will be on baseball and football. Things to keep in mind:

1. You should be selective about the customer you let play futures and the amount of money involved. Many a bookie has been left holding the bag (and an empty one, at that) by a customer who absolutely knows in preseason that Green Bay is going to win the Super Bowl but by the time January arrives has disappeared forever. If you would have asked any football fan before the 1997 and 1998 preseasons who will win the Super Bowl, most of them would have immediately spouted out "Packers," but Green Bay had only won *one Super Bowl in the previous 30 years*. Based on that trend, football fans couldn't bet the Packers fast enough to win another four or five of the championship games, and they all lost those bets. The only problem is that by the time those bets came due, many of those customers had already lost plenty and been tapped out. There was no money coming to pay off the futures bets that had lost. How do you get around that?
2. You have your customers post the money in advance. "Posting the money" only means they give you the amount of the wager at the time that the action is taken. *Make sure that they understand that the \$1,000 paid to you in March for the World Series future on the Dodgers can only be used for the World Series future on the Dodgers.*

What I am saying is that many times a customer who has paid up front for a future will wind up losing more during the regular season than he can afford to pay. At that time, he will say, "Well, I am \$1,000 short. Just use that \$1,000 I gave you in March to pay the rest of what I owe." That is like asking General Motors to just use that car payment you sent them in February to pay for the one that is due in June. As we say in Georgia, "It don't work that way."

The futures bet money is gone until the bet is either won or lost at the World Series. Now I must tell you that, at this point, you have gotten all the money you are going to get from this customer. The only upside is that if you hadn't required him to post the money up front, not only would he still be \$1,000 short on the amount due now, he also would still owe the \$1,000 on the futures bet. At least this way, you cut your losses in half. Remember, all gamblers lose money—and sometimes they lose so much that you wind up not getting paid. Get futures money up front and you will cut your losses immensely.

### **The Calcutta**

Most of **your** futures action will be for bets that don't have an **outcome** for **quite** a while. One **exception** is a **Calcutta**. This is a **party** you will host twice each spring that will make you a large profit (your main concern), endear your customers to you even further, and provide you with an evening of entertainment.

From that description, there seems to be very little downside to hosting a Calcutta. This is one time, however, when something that seems too good to be true is, in fact, true. "Hey, let's have calcuttas once a week!" you may be shouting. Well, even if you weren't shouting that, after reading this chapter you will understand why calcuttas are wonderful things that work best when held only the aforementioned twice a year.

### ***How It Works***

At about 6 **P.M.** on the second Sunday of March, ESPN will televise the NCAA basketball tournament selections. On this telecast, the 64 teams that will compete in the tournament beginning the cora-

ing Thursday will be announced. Two nights later, on the Tuesday following the selection show but preceding the tip-off of the tourney, you will host a **Calcutta**.

One of the first things to do in preparation for the party is to secure a site. If you have a customer who owns a restaurant or you know someone who owns one, you should see **about** holding the **Calcutta** there. At your **Calcutta** you will **want** to wine and dine your guests (actually, you will want to liquor and dine your guests—booze contributes greatly to your profits). To this end, hosting the party in the back room at a restaurant takes care of all the refreshment needs.

If no restaurant is available, look into the meeting rooms at local hotels. Be aware, however, that most hotels with adequate meeting rooms will also have on-site food and beverage facilities, and if you suggest bringing in your own eatables and drinkables, they will look at you like you have nine heads. At that point, you can either pony up the hotel's price of about \$6 per beer or pay off the catering manager in charge of the refreshments (\$500 seems to work well in Atlanta).

Anyway, enough talk about the drinks and such. They don't put money in your pocket, unless you combine them with gambling, which *does* put money in your pocket. So let's talk about gambling.

What will happen after everyone has arrived and gotten liquored up is that the 64 teams in the NCAA field will be auctioned off until they are all gone. A slight change I made after my first Calcutta was that the four number-one seeds were auctioned off as two parts (e.g., Duke A and Duke B), and I also parceled out the four lowest seeds in each of the four regions as one lot of teams (e.g., Eastern Region seeds 13-16, Western Region 13-16, etc.). Under this system, there are a total of 56 lots to be auctioned. After all the teams have been purchased, you collect the money from those who bought the teams and wait for the tournament to begin. Where does your profit come? Well, the payout for the Calcutta is as follows:



<b>Result</b>	<b>Payoff %</b>	<b># of teams that pay off</b>	<b>Total %</b>
1 st round worst loss	2	1	2
2nd round worst loss	2	1	2
Lose in round of 16	2	8	16
Lose in round of 8	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	16
Lose in final four	8	2	16
Lose championship game	14	1	14
Win championship game	24	<b>1</b>	24
<b>Total</b>		<b>18</b>	<b>90</b>

From the above information, you can see that 18 teams will pay back money to whoever purchased that team. Also, you can see that the total payout only totals 90 percent, thus giving you the standard house advantage of 10 percent. With 50 to 60 bidders (a relatively small turnout), you should have a pot approaching \$100,000, giving you a tidy \$10,000 gross profit for about three hours of work.

You will have to pay out expenses for an auctioneer (talk to an antiques dealer; he or she should be able to recommend one), usually about \$200 for the night. This is an expense that is well worth every cent. A quality auctioneer can single-handedly increase bids between 10 and 15 percent per lot, using the standard techniques of the trade.

You will also have to pay for food, drinks, and location. If you have a customer who can help in any of these areas, your expenses could be cut drastically, but even if you have to foot every penny yourself, you can get 60 people sufficiently fed and drunk for less than \$3,000. If you throw an extravagant, lavish party you might top out at \$5,000, still giving you \$5,000 for doing nothing. That is if it is a small affair. In March 1999,<sup>1</sup> I held my most recent Calcutta at the Italian restaurant I am part owner of and, thus, food and drink were no problem. It attracted 112 people (one of the clerks did a head count) and produced a pot of \$211,000. The party lasted about three hours, and, after expenses, I took home a profit of almost \$18,000.

### *A Few Notes about a Successful Calcutta*

First, it is important that your customers understand the payout to the team that loses by the most points in the first and second rounds. This is what gives value to the four 13-16 groupings, as well as a few 11 and 12 seeds. You can count on each of the four 13-16 lots bringing between \$1,000 and \$1,500, based on a \$100,000 pot. This is a microcosm of the entire Calcutta, as the four successful bids for these lots will bring in about \$5,000 and only pay out 2 percent (\$2,000) to the one team that loses by the most in the first round.

Also, anyone buying half of a number-one seed only collects half of whatever money that team wins. If two people have each purchased half of a number-one-seeded Kentucky team, they don't both collect 24 percent of the pot. That would dramatically change the attractiveness of hosting a Calcutta.

Additionally, you may want to let it be known in the weeks leading up to the party that you are guaranteeing a certain amount of money in the pot. It can be as little as \$10,000 or as much as \$100,000. The point is that whatever you guarantee will be met by the bidders, but it allows people a number to figure the percentages by as the night begins. If the customers know that there will be a minimum of \$100,000 for the taking, that tells them that the first-round bad beat will pay them at least \$2,000, as well as minimums for teams losing in the Sweet Sixteen, the Final Four, etc. It helps them to gauge their bidding and greatly increases the pot. You should have no problems meeting the guarantee based entirely on what is actually bid.

Finally, make sure all in attendance know that all successful bids will be paid for in cash that night. This is an auction, not a retail store. No credit, no extended payment terms.

You may wish to also have a Calcutta for the Masters golf tournament. The basics for the party are the same, but the payout differs a bit. You may wish to use the following chart:

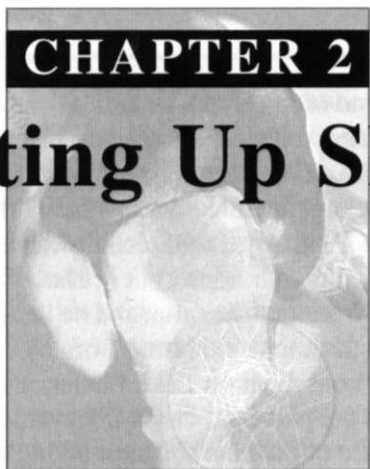
<b>Action</b>	<b>Payout percent</b>
Leader after Thursday	2
Leader after Friday	2
Leader after Saturday	2
Winner	30
2nd place	20
3rd	12
4th	10
5th	6
6th	4
7th	2

Again, we have a total payout of 90 percent, giving you the same house advantage. Depending on the makeup of your clientele and how much they enjoy golf, the Masters Calcutta could produce a relatively small pot of between \$80,000 and \$100,000. One of the most humbling experiences of my life, however, was in April 1998 when I was invited to a Masters Calcutta by a friend of mine. The pot for the night totaled almost \$800,000 and, not expecting those kind of stakes, I had only brought about \$10,000. I pooled my money with the cash my friend had brought, and together we purchased one golfer for about \$17,000. Hosting a Calcutta this big has become my target.

Although I have sold my business to two of my clerks, I still hold both calcuttas each spring because of my name recognition around Atlanta. Each year the parties have gotten bigger, as those who attended the previous year's event tell their friends about it. The same principle applies to you. Do the calcuttas and do them right. The financial rewards will be tremendous.

## CHAPTER 2

# Setting Up Shop



**W**ith a clear understanding of all the different types of action your customers will want, you now need to run the few hundred errands required before your grand opening. There aren't really that many, but if you are doing this by yourself, it may seem like it.

### LOCATION

The first step of many on the way to being open for business is to find an acceptable location. Your main concern is having a location for your business that will prevent you from being detected by any sort of law enforcement. The two items to be most aware of in that regard are preventing your cell phone location from being traced and not having any evidence on you if you do get caught. I have known many different bookmakers and they, along with myself at times, have gotten quite clever in pursuit of a worry-free operating environment. Among the many . . .

- Harley is a friend of mine with a medium-sized, 150- to 175-customer business outside of Athens, Georgia. He had a home custom built on the edge of a mountain in north Georgia with a large picture window facing the only way in to the property. Typically, I will recommend against running your business from your home, but in Harley's case, trouble can only come from one direction and he has a half-mile driveway's worth of time to rid himself of any evidence.
- Tuna owned a houseboat on Lake Lanier, and, when it was time to turn on the phones each day, he would simply motor out to the middle of the lake and start taking action. As with most bookies, Tuna used rice paper and had a convenient source of water to destroy Exhibit A. He got his nickname from a local who noticed how much time he was spending on the water and, thinking that tuna can be found in lakes (I'm not making this up), decided it was a good nickname. Apparently he was thinking of the rare freshwater tuna.
- Steve was a moderately successful bookie who, in most instances, seemed about as sharp as a basketball. I will give him credit for one idea, though, concerning the search for a good office. Steve purchased a Chevy conversion van with every window on the back half of it tinted and covered by a curtain. He also ran a curtain between the two captain's chairs up front and the rest of the van. On days when one person could cover the phones, he would have his clerk drive the interstates around Atlanta as he rode in the back taking action. On busier days, they would simply pile in the van, drive to a mall or the top of a parking deck and pick out a nice space. For the next couple of hours, both of them would man the phones and write the plays.
- Frankie 45 had possibly the most ingenious way of protecting himself. When a new apartment complex with two separate buildings opened, Frankie 45 and one of his friends each rented a new apartment there, one in each of the buildings. No one lived in either of them, but Frankie 45 used regular

## SETTING UP SHOP

land-based phones and gave out the number for apartment one as the number for his customers to call. He had the phone in that apartment call-forwarded to the second apartment, thus giving himself ample time to vaporize if apartment one was visited by Atlanta's finest.

Where did Frankie 45 get his name? He had a spinal problem that kept his neck at a permanent 45 degree angle. Fellow bookies show no mercy when doling out nicknames.

These are just some examples of the lengths to which some of my friends have been willing to go in the pursuit of a safe working environment. The bottom line is that no precaution is too much trouble, as getting caught makes the rest of this book null and void. What follows is a list of steps you can take to give yourself the best chance possible of an extended, lucrative career.

The best scenario for setting up shop begins with renting office space. Find a small commercial office building with a monthly rate of around \$500. Now for \$500 you will not be in a suite at the Hilton, but in most places you should be able to get a couple hundred square feet, and that is really all you need.

There are many office parks that resemble strip plazas, and you should seek out one of these. Best case will have the hallway on the inside of the building, but that's not required. If you are able to get an office above the ground floor, so much the better. It will be better for cell phone reception, as well as giving you a better scan of the parking lot in anticipation of unwanted visitors.

Inside the office, you will prefer to have at least two rooms. The main door will lead to an outer office. That outer office will then have a door leading to a second room, where you actually will be doing business. The best office Curtis ever rented had the outer office and then a hallway with three doors leading to three separate rooms. Bottom line: if the police arrive, every second you slow them down will be better for you.

Oh yeah, one more thing about selecting the location ... if you ever are really in a hurry, you can resort to what I had to do my first

season on my own. I rented a hotel room, called an escort, and had my clerk wait in the parking lot while I entertained her. When she left, he followed her back to the office she reported to and we talked to the complex's manager the next day about vacant space. If it was good enough for the escort service, it was good enough for us.

You now have a location. The next thing you do is pay about \$45 and have a professional install a security lock on the main door. You are now ready to buy essential supplies and services.

## PHONES

To this point, I have made references to cell phones and how to get the best reception, avoid detection, etc. Technology has made locating a cell phone child's play, and most bookies I know are now going back to land lines. The following factors will help you decide:

### Cell Phones

You will most likely have to get a credit check and provide all sorts of information you don't want to. You will have to get separate numbers for however many cell phones you use. When you get enough customers for your business to be extremely profitable, you will be incurring monthly cell phone bills as high as \$2,500. Cell phones sometimes disconnect callers for no apparent reason. Every day it is getting easier for law enforcement to track cell phone calls. That seems like quite a list of negatives. Why, then, would bookies go against all of that and continue to use them? Because cell phones can be used wherever you decide you want to use them. The same phone that you use in the office can be transported to a different location if an emergency requires it. Portability and a certain degree of anonymity accompany cell phone usage.

### Land Lines

Land lines will run you about \$19 a month for one basic line. If you need three or four phones, you can make a one-time purchase of about \$300 for a system that will forward an incoming call to the

## SETTING UP SHOP

next available handset. This also will allow you to give out only one number to your customers. Also, police expect bookies to use cell phones, and the equipment they use to detect cell phones will in no way pick up signals from land lines.

Land lines, however, are registered to a single, physical address, and you may need to have them call-forwarded to the actual location where you do business. Also, be careful to whom you make outgoing calls. Regardless of the obvious steps you should take (e.g., unpublished number, not listed with directory assistance), there will be times you can risk giving away your location to someone you have called.

You now have an office and phone service. For both of these, you will be required to provide some type of personal information to the building management and the phone company. It is best now to adopt a false personality. You may want to go the full route of getting a false birth certificate and Social Security number, but at the very least you should choose a name that your customers will know you by.

I had a friend who occasionally called me J.J. because he thought I reminded him of the character on the television program *Good Times* (like I said, nicknames can be rough sometimes). I just extended that to James Jefferies and rented a mailbox in that name, had business cards printed up (Excel Investments), and all my customers knew me as J.J. When I was asked to fill out any form for rental space or phone service, James Jefferies came alive. I had an entire background and personal history for him. If you can get a driver's license for your new personality, do so. Look in the back of *Rolling Stone* magazine and several lesser publications for services that create new identities. Your best choice for information on alternate identities, however, would be to get a catalog from Paladin Press in Boulder, Colorado.

### Answering Service

We are not talking about the kind of answering service that will take calls after hours. What you want is to get a number from an answering service that will provide you with the ability to record a greeting and then take messages. You don't really care about the "take



messages" part, because the people who call this number will be doing so strictly to hear the greeting. Some of you may be thinking, "You are gonna pay someone for a glorified answering machine?"

It is more than that. Your answering machine at home can only take one call at a time. The service you want to get will be able to handle up to 25 to 30 calls simultaneously. Also, most answering machines will record a greeting up to one or two minutes long. The number the service gets you will take a 59-minute greeting if you wish. What this "greeting" will be is the daily lines so that you don't have to repeat them to every customer who calls in. They can call the number the answering service has given you (the "tape number") and your greeting will be, "Tuesday, April 4. We will be in the office today from 6:00 until 7:30, back tomorrow from 6:00 until 7:30. In tonight's baseball . . ." and follow with the lines.

A customer does have the ability to listen to the entire greeting and then leave you a message, but most usually don't know that. You will end every message with, "This information not intended to violate any federal, state, or local laws." After the first time hearing that, most customers will know it signals the end of the information they care about and will hang up halfway through the disclaimer, never making it to the beep that begins their opportunity to leave you a message.

## SUPPLIES

You will need to make a trip to an office supply store for essentials. A few things will probably require a trip to Wal-Mart, and you will also need to visit an art supply store for at least one item. Your start-up budget will vary, but a bare-bones operation with you as the only employee will require at least the following:

- Comfortable chair, something you can sit in for seven or eight hours without ruining your back
- Desk or table with a large, flat surface on which to work
- Reasonably up-to-date computer system
- Several 12-packs of legal-sized yellow pads

## SETTING UP SHOP

- Pencils and a pencil sharpener
- Papermate black ink, medium-point pens
- Papermate blue ink, medium-point pens
- Flat, plastic, see-through ruler (a wide one)
- Multi-pack of wide-tipped yellow highlighters
- 3 or 4 rolls of stamps
- 100 or so mailing envelopes (about the size of a book should do)
- Schedules of the "Official Las Vegas Rotation"
- Fax machine
- Adding machine
- Many rolls of adding machine tape and reams of fax machine paper
- 2 medium-sized buckets
- Box fan
- The biggest pack of rice paper you can find

### **A Few Notes about Some of These Items**

You may already have a chair and a table or desk, so that will cut down on your start-up costs. Most likely, you also have an available computer. If not, for less than \$1,000 you can get one that will provide everything you need. Contact ATS at 1-800-772-1287 and tell the representative you need a copy of the Vegas rotation. That is simply the listing, in the correct order, of all the games available to bet. If you tell the individual you provide copies to many of your friends, he or she will most often send you all the copies you want because the inside is filled with ads for their products, and you act as a distribution manager. You win, ATS wins, and, if they continue to gamble, your customers lose. Also, go to the Web to [www.jimfeist.com](http://www.jimfeist.com). You will want to use his SportsTracker 2 program. More about that later.

You may need to order the rice paper from an art supply store, so get on that one early. It's not cheap, either. It will run you about \$500 for a pack of 1,000 sheets. If you know why you need the rice paper, you probably also know why you need the buckets. . . .



## CHAPTER 3

# Being the Boss

(. . . *Maybe*)

**I**n Chapter 2 we discussed setting up your business from scratch and many of the out-of-pocket expenses required to run a first-class, professional (and profitable) sports book. What we didn't cover was the subject of employees and how many you should have, if any.

In its infant stages, your business may operate most effectively with you as its only employee. As you add customers and phones and expand your hours of operation (as well as probably wanting some sort of social life), you will most likely also add some employees. Who are they? Where do you find them? Fair questions to ask, and we answer them in this chapter.

### THE OFFICE CLERK

This was how I got my start with Curtis. The basic duty of the clerk is to sit across from you in the office and accept calls that you can't answer. Usually you will have a "lead phone," one that most of

the calls will come on. The days you are in the office, you will man the lead phone and the clerk will handle the second line.

When my customer base had swelled to the point where we needed four phones in the office, I hired a third clerk for the busy days and only gave out the number of that phone to players who never bet more than \$100 on a game. I figured that if he was going to screw up, at least it wouldn't affect any of my really important customers. As he got more experienced at answering phones and felt more comfortable in the office, we gave more customers that number. Just remember to always make sure your clerk is competent before letting him handle your big dogs.

When both you and the clerk are in the office, all questions customers may ask him and all decision making are always deferred to you. For the first few weeks, you will not want him anywhere near a customer without you. By that time, you will know whether he can handle the responsibility or whether you should be searching for another clerk. The clerk is most beneficial to you during baseball season when there are day games almost every day and, consequently, two shifts every day. Believe me, working 12 to 1 and 6 to 7:30 Monday through Sunday seriously cuts into golf time. My first spring, I found myself starting baseball season without a clerk, and I regretted it the entire summer. Once you have confidence in your clerk, you will actually look forward to day baseball. Your not working is a good thing. Your not working and knowing that someone else has to is even better.

### **Qualities to Look for in an Office Clerk**

- At least a basic knowledge of sports and sports betting
- Reasonable intelligence
- Honesty (good luck)
- Punctuality
- Single, with no kids (not a necessity, but very much preferred)
- Nonsmoker (if cigarette smoke bothers you, you don't want to sit there day after day with someone who smokes)

### **Tasks an Office Clerk Should Learn Before Working a Shift Alone**

- Getting the lines from your computer service
- Making the tapes before the shift starts
- Writing action the proper way
- Closing the office at the end of the shift

Most often the clerk is not only in the office with you answering phones and taking action but also is expected to run many of the more mundane (but necessary) errands that you usually have been taking care of. The clerk should be paid between \$300 and \$500 a week cash, as well as a cut of the profits (usually 5 percent). In addition to his salary and percentage, he will also be paid a bonus of a week's pay for every profit milestone the business reaches during a particular sports season. I always paid my clerks a week's salary every time we passed another \$100,000 in profit per season.

Before hiring a clerk, there are a few things you should understand (and make sure the clerk understands as well).

- Jobs like this aren't listed in the "Help Wanted" section of the Sunday classifieds.
- The money the clerk will make is very good—a \$500 a week job in cash is the equivalent of a taxed income of approximately \$40,000.
- He should expect to make at least as much in percentage and bonus money as he does in salary.
- He is the employee, and you are the boss.

The following are some particulars about the points made so far, starting with the last one.

Establish from day one that you will pay him well, but that you don't intend to give it away. He will be on call 25 hours a day. Nothing you will ask him to do will require much effort and, usually, not much time. If you tell him to go pay the cell phone bills, he'd better have it done the next time you two speak. If a customer has

called to set up a time to pay you \$10,000 and he is located an hour away, the clerk will go pick up the money and return promptly without complaint. I am not advocating intentionally having a contentious relationship with your clerk. On the contrary, the business will run better if you get along well. But the clerk must understand that you don't just sit around all day dreaming up stuff for him to do, and when you ask him to do something, he needs to carry out your instructions to a tee. The way Curtis used to put it, "We aren't doing brain surgery here, but it has to be done RIGHT!"

Also, if he is working for you, he probably has not just resigned from his position with NASA. For whatever reason, he is in need of money—a stout salary that is in cash and is 100 percent tax free will help alleviate most any financial bind. If he ever starts to bitch and complain about the hours or how unreasonable you are, tell him he is always free to go at any time. It is a bluff he will not take, as he can't just go down to the employment department and ask to be relocated to another bookie. The money is enough to make him stay. Besides, you don't really want a bunch of pissed-off ex-clerks walking around your city, so be firm, be in charge, but also be reasonable.

If you are going to be hiring someone to work with you in this business, you must be able to trust him absolutely and accept that, at some time, he will probably steal from you. Stress the whole "I am hiring you because I trust you" thing. To most people, this won't mean much, but if it delays for even a day the time when he begins to steal, so much the better.

Oh, yeah. Stress the whole "If I ever catch you stealing even one quarter from me, you are fired" thing, too. Rarely will the clerk steal actual cash from you, as in slipping a hundred or two out of a stack of \$4,700 that he just picked up from a customer across town. Whenever he makes pickups for you, always be sure to immediately count the money in front of him when he returns. Most often the clerk will try to steal from you by setting up fake customers and trying to "win" money on their accounts. You can eliminate that by paying particular attention to Chapters 6 and 8.

With all that said, the question remains: where do you get

clerks? Usually, you can get them off your own paysheet. The paysheet is the ledger that is updated daily, showing on the left side of the page which customers owe you and how much and on the right side who is owed and how much. You will always have more customers on the left and should consider this a deep pool of potential clerks. As you take their calls each night, you will develop an idea of each customer's intelligence, phone manners, discretion, etc.

If someone is calling to place bets each night, he obviously has at least a basic understanding of how things work, so you wouldn't be writing on a completely blank slate as you try to explain the more intricate details of being in the office. Also, if he is gambling on sports, he is losing money. If given the chance to make money instead of paying money, he will give strong consideration to it. Some of your customers with whom you have a more personable relationship may even come out and ask you if you need any help. That's what I did, and the answer was "yes." I have not regretted it.

If you have asked someone to come on as the new clerk and it doesn't seem to be working out, tough it out until there is a natural break in the sports schedule (e.g., the Super Bowl, the end of the basketball playoffs) and explain to him that whatever time of year you are entering is normally a bit slower and that you won't be using a clerk again till next year. "You suck and I don't want you anywhere near my business!" is a much less desirable approach. Again, you don't want a large group of disgruntled former employees. With your customers and your employees, always be friendly.

One final thing: make sure anyone you hire understands there can be no drugs in the office or on his person, *ever*. Dealing with law enforcement on charges of commercial gambling is an extremely harmless thing to do. Dealing with law enforcement on drug charges—possession, distributing, etc.—is much more unpleasant.

## THE FAX CLERK

During a shift, you will answer phones and write action. These wagers will be written on legal-sized sheets of rice paper that have

been torn in half and divided into five columns. You will get the specifics of that several pages later, but at the conclusion of each shift you will fax these sheets to a clerk who is located in a different part of the city. He will then record each play in his computer, using any one of the many software programs designed specifically for this.

If it is a shift where you will be in the office for a long time, such as a college football Saturday, you may want to fax the clerk the latest plays every hour or so to allow him to stay caught up with you. Most of these programs will automatically tell you how much action you have on each side of every game, and that will let you know what games are really important to your wallet for that particular day. At the conclusion of the night's games, you (or your office clerk) will manually grade the work, call the fax man, and then compare your work against what his computer says. After confirming which customers have won, which customers have lost, and how much either way, his computer will automatically update the paysheet, and you will do it manually. You will then check your paysheet against his. You may also want to do all of this on a computer, but your doing it manually and then checking it against what the computer says will occasionally catch an error he may have made inputting the information. It is more time consuming to do it manually, but if you have already hired an office clerk, that's not your concern anymore.

The fax clerk will be paid the same weekly amount as the office clerk, as well as the same percentages and bonuses. He will actually be at least as important to hire as anyone you may add to the office. Having someone in a different location who already has copies of all the plays is darn handy. The story of how I spilled a Dr. Pepper all over the rice paper containing that day's plays is funny now. It wasn't then.

You should have one fax clerk. Depending on how many customers you have and how much work you feel like doing, you could have one office clerk or five office clerks or no office clerks. Besides that, your payroll is pretty much complete.

The second football season I was running the business, I had five office clerks, a fax clerk, and a driver to cart my ass all around town.

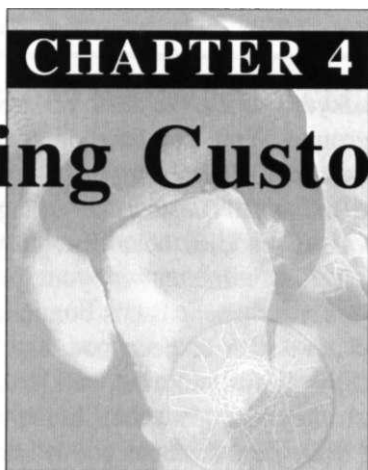


I had gotten my third driving-under-the-influence (DUI) ticket in 11 months, and the state of Georgia was so angry that it suspended my driver's license for a year. After I had gotten my license back, I kept the driver on the payroll as a do-boy. It wasn't cheap, but it made life a lot easier for me and my other clerks.

As your business expands, it may get to the point where you need to hire someone to simply run errands, but I never minded making the office clerks work a little harder. They were getting paid well. I felt they should earn it.

## CHAPTER 4

# Getting Customers



**A**ll the chapters you have read so far have been important, but if you don't pay particular attention to this one, and then put the information to use, nothing else in this book will matter. The single most important activity on which you should spend time outside the office is getting more customers. The bottom line in this business is the more action you write, the more money you make.

You will always want to add what you believe are solid customers, not only to expand your business, but also to replace those customers who have proven to be bad debt or simply have been worn down by the house advantage. Understanding that the customer who plays only \$100 a game will lose \$3,000 to \$4,000 over the course of any given season should give you plenty of incentive to hit the bricks. If you use your time wisely, reaching a customer base of 200 or so (a little better than average) should be no problem.

Getting new customers is not as simple as advertising in the newspaper or sticking fliers on the windshields of cars. Nor can you

just go out to the backyard, shake the customer tree, and watch them start falling to the ground. What you have on your side, however, is word of mouth. "I won \$3,000 from my man this weekend, and he paid me in full at 10:00 A.M. Tuesday." If enough co-workers and roommates and drinking buddies hear that, they are sure to say, "Hey, you think you could get me on with your guy?" The best thing you can do to expand your client list is continue to treat the customers you already have with respect, courtesy, and professionalism—and to always pay in full, on time, and in cash. People like to talk, especially when they just spent their lunch break picking up a sack of money, and if all the talk about you is similar to that above, you will have no problems adding new callers.

What if you are starting out with no customers? There are still ways to maximize returns on your efforts. The first step is to understand the basic truth that gamblers know other gamblers. Think back to the first time you talked to a bookie. Didn't you know somebody who was gambling and he set you up? Or were you in the employee break room when one of your co-workers had a sports page out and was checking the lines? Nothing has changed since that time, except that gambling has become more popular than ever. If you are considering opening your own sports book operation, odds are you know people who gamble on sports. Some of them are probably looking for a new outlet to wager.

I always told potential customers who already had a bookie that if they would try me just one weekend, they would never go back to their previous bookie, and in the 8 1/2 years I was in the business, none ever did. If you follow the guidelines in this book and conduct your business based on the information here, you will create many ex-customers for other bookies around your city. You can start a football season with as few as 10 customers, and by the time bowl season has arrived, word of mouth recommendation should swell your paysheet to 50 or 60. At that level, even if the customers are small time, you should be employing an office clerk and a fax clerk while still leaving yourself a profit of \$100,000 or so for six months of semi-work.

## SPORT OR COUNTRY CLUBS

Another way to increase customers is to spend your leisure time where gamblers spend their leisure time. Basic truth number two: Golfers love to gamble. Whether it is a \$1-a-hole or \$500-for-closest-to-the-pin wager, money changes hands when buddies get together on the links. Visit a golf warehouse or discount store, and the clerk there should be able to provide you with the names of several local private clubs you can join. Many have stipulations that you have to be sponsored by a current member of the club, but some don't. Find one where the membership fee is only \$1,000 or so, plus monthly dues, and join.

Besides improving your golf game (never a bad thing), being a member of the club will allow you to meet the other members of the club. Whether it is on the fairway or in the clubhouse, most of these men will enjoy a friendly wager from time to time. You should be discreet when divulging how you make your living, but a cell phone call from a cart while the other three are deciding which club to use will start the conversation.

Being proficient at spades, hearts, gin, etc., will also provide you the chance to meet other gamblers at the club. Many older gentlemen go to the club every day to do nothing other than sit in the pro shop or locker room playing poker for eight or ten hours. Be friendly, be discreet, and, before long, you will be taking action.

The same basic truth (loving to gamble) applies to most guys who play tennis, but many actually participate in that sport for health benefits, and that is not our focus here.

## BARS

Looking for more customers? Select a few bars in different parts of your city and become a regular. This does not mean you also become an alcoholic, as ginger ale or cranberry juice is usually what I order. (Trust me when I say that getting a DUI is not a fun thing, and it is even less so when the arresting officer sees that you

have a hundred copies of the official Las Vegas betting schedule in your backseat. That's what law enforcement refers to as a "clue." But back to bars.)

When I say select a few "bars," I am not talking about a T.G.I. Fridays or Chilis. I am talking about real bars. You know, the kind where when you walk in you can't see anything for a minute or two until your eyes adjust. Real bars don't have 143 televisions. They usually have one above the bar and one in the back room where the card tables are. Find a few establishments like this and you have also just found a couple more customers.

Go in, sit at the bar, and begin watching television. When you curse a basketball player for missing a free throw when his team is up by 17, the gamblers in the joint will know why you are upset. Most likely, they will be the ones to bring up sports wagering. "Who ya' got?" is a common opener. When you reply, "I've got something on every team," the conversation is started, and pretty soon you have another reason to visit the bar. Settle-up day.

## OTHER BOOKIES

Probably the best way to get a lot of customers on your ledger in one motion is an arrangement where another bookie becomes a "sub-book" to you. It works like this.

Almost without exception, small to mid-size bookies will shut down after the NCAA basketball tournament is over and not reopen until football season starts in August. You should have no problem finding a player who, toward the end of basketball season, is looking for a new place to play so that he can bet on baseball. The truly amateur bookie will think only of adding one new customer and, while taking on the new guy, will promise not to tell his regular bookie that he has gone somewhere else. What you *should* be doing in situations like this is not only have him tell his regular bookie about you, but ask that he put you in touch with his regular bookie.

At this point, you can present a no-risk offer to the bookie who is planning to stop taking action for a while. What you propose is

## GETTING CUSTOMERS

that he tell all his current customers that he will be shutting down for baseball, but that if any of them want to get action on the games, he can recommend someone who is staying open. Explain to the bookie that you will keep a separate record of whatever money, as a group, his customers wind up collecting as a net winner or paying as a net loser. If they finish the season on the plus side (they won't), *you* will pay out every penny. If they finish the season on the negative side (they will), *you and* he will split the profits 50-50. All he has to do is meet with you each Tuesday morning to get the figures and then go pay or collect from the guys he put on. It will cost him nothing. He will have to do almost no work. He will make money. Make sure the bookie realizes that in no way are you trying to snake his customers, just make money for both of you. He is planning on being closed anyway and, if he does it his way, he makes zero dollars for the summer. Do it your way and he makes many dollars for the summer. Abiding by that agreement will, at the very least, be a money maker for a few months for you and the other bookie (now a "sub-book" to you).

What normally happens is the bookie (a lazy creature by nature) will realize that he made a bucket of money for working one day a week, and when August creeps over the hill, will suggest that you two continue the arrangement. Do this once a year and you will be extremely wealthy. You know the best part of this deal? With the extra money you get from this sub-book's customers, you will be able to more than pay for another clerk, and now you won't be working every day, either.

## VETERANS' OR SERVICE GROUPS

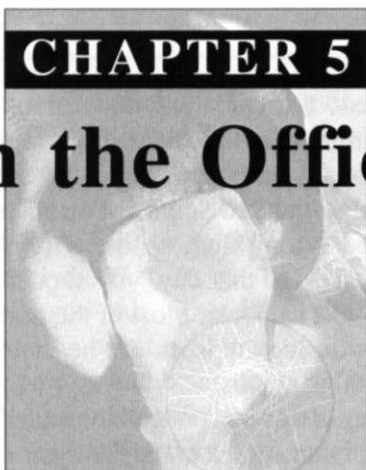
Becoming a member of a VFW or Eagle's lodge or similar organization is a fantastic way to grow your business. I had been making book for seven years when I joined one just north of Atlanta, and within two days, they had taught me new ways to gamble on sports. The bartender was the guy at the lodge who organized all the betting there, and he was confused by it, more than anything else. He

was happy when someone came along offering to help. "Helping" quickly turned into I had 53 new customers as a result of paying my \$200 initiation fee. Besides being served semi-warm beer and having to listen to much more Hank Jr. than I ever knew existed, there was little downside to it.

Finally, I have acquired customers in a variety of other ways. Bookies have died, gone semi-legit, gotten married, gotten scared, or gone to jail (nongambling-related charge). Hell, one buddy of mine decided that having to work three hours a day was just *too* much for him. For whatever the reason, if you can beat the bushes and open with even 10 or 12 guys, you will have 50 before you know it. At that point, you are making a decent enough chunk of change to hire a clerk. You can then justify making him work all the shifts by himself, as you are out "recruiting new customers" (hanging out in bars or playing golf).

## CHAPTER 5

# In the Office



**T**here are some standards that you should use concerning your business, and the first of those is to think of it as exactly that, a business. There is no shortage of bookies in any metropolitan area, and, just like in any other business, you need to operate at a higher level of professionalism, competency, and courtesy to attract new customers and maintain accounts with those customers you already have. To that end, you should consider the following policies that I developed from working for Curtis and, later, running the business myself.

### KEEPING REGULAR HOURS

First, and most important, you should have set business hours. Far too many bookies cheat themselves out of profits because their customers aren't sure when or for how long the book is open on a particular day. That should never be a concern for your customers. Standards to go by, with all times Eastern Standard Time, include the following:



- During the week, if there is any day action, you should be open that day from noon to 1:00 **P.M.** There are exceptions to this, such as the day each April when the Boston Marathon is run. On this day, the Red Sox insist on having a game start just as the race is finishing, so the first pitch is usually around 11:05 **A.M.** On this day, you should be open from 10:30 or 10:45 to 11:05 **A.M.** Most of the time, however, the only day action during the week can be covered with a normal noon to 1:00 **P.M.** shift.
- The evening games can most often be handled with a shift of 6:00 to 7:30 **P.M.** Sometimes in baseball you will have a 5:35 start or such and you may want to open a bit early to handle that game or just include it in the day action and be open the standard time. It shouldn't happen more than three or four times during a season, but make sure your customers have an opportunity to wager every game. Remember one of our basic truths: The more action you write, the more money you make.
- Weekends will vary slightly, but on Saturdays for baseball and basketball season, you will do fine with a noon to 1:00 **P.M.** and 6:00 to 7:30 **P.M.** College football Saturdays require a bit more, as you will want to open at 11:00 **A.M.** and remain open until 7:30 **P.M.** It's a bitch sometimes, especially considering how late you may have stayed out the night before and how much action you will have to grade that night, but a medium-sized operation can turn a \$250,000 profit with no problem during football season so just keep your eye on the bottom line and work a full shift on those Saturdays. When your business has increased to 150 to 200 customers, you could be looking at possibly a million-dollar profit during those six months. At that point, you have hired clerks and don't really care how much they have to work. You are the boss, so crack a mean whip and make sure the office is run the way it should be.
- Sundays for NFL football will require an 11:00 **A.M.** to 4:15 **P.M.** shift. We used to only be open till 4:00 on Sundays, but

then the league moved back the starting times of the afternoon games to 4:15. (This was done strictly to accommodate gamblers, regardless of what anyone will say publicly. More about that later. . . .) Some bookies are open again on Sunday nights from 7:00 or so till the kickoff of the late game, but I never did that. As we have stated before, our main goal (hell, our only goal) is profit. Your decisions should be based on what will put the most bottom-line money in your pocket, and being open for Sunday nights is not part of that. Customers who have had a particularly poor day will want to call and load up on the night game and will just wind up burying themselves even further, making it more likely they won't pay at all.

Some would say the customers make desperation plays on Monday night before settle-up day (which usually falls on Tuesday), so what's the difference? Well, the difference is that if you are open for the late game on Sunday nights, most of your action will come from customers who have just seen their day go in the toilet because of a fumble or dropped pass or blown call from the zebras. An emotional bettor has almost no chance of winning and, as stated, will only push himself in the hole deeper with a Sunday night play. It has been my experience that some almost-buried customers will be the first to call on Monday nights, after having an entire day to think about the reality of their situation and admit that they are at their limit and shouldn't play that night. Not all customers do this, but some do; if just one or two a week wind up paying the \$5,000 or so they owe instead of crapping out on all of it, your profit margin is greatly increased.

For Sundays that don't include NFL football, a shift of noon to 1:00 or 1:30 **P.M.** will most likely allow all customers a chance to get in.

- Monday nights during football season, you can open for business at the regular 6:00 time, but don't close until kick-

off of the Monday night game. Gamblers like to think that by watching the preview show on ESPN, they will have up-to-the-minute information on injuries and weather and other items of importance, thus helping them make a wiser play on the game. If this is what makes them feel good, let them watch the preview show all the way through and not call until the ref waves his arm and blows the whistle to begin the game. They will still lose money to you over the course of the season, so, again, anything you can do to make your business more customer-friendly than another bookie they may know is all the better for you.

There will be a few other times during the year when you will need to use some common sense as far as what hours to be open, but we are mostly talking about marquee events like the Super Bowl or New Year's Day.

## BEING PUNCTUAL

What will set you apart from the other bookies in town is that your customers know they will be able to get action at regular times each day. Other less profitable operations will have such varying hours that Big Blue would have a difficult time keeping track of them. Still worse, some bookies operate by pager, having the customer dial the pager number and calling the gambler back at what ever number he has entered. Nothing is worse than trying to fend off folks who want to use a pay phone at the Super Dome because you are waiting for your bookie to call you back on that line. (I actually did that for the Miami-Tennessee Sugar Bowl in 1986. I must say that drunk Miami fans are much friendlier than drunk Tennessee fans.)

A basic idea some bookies let escape them is to open on time. Many times a customer will be hanging around a phone waiting till 6:00 so he can call, and if you don't come strolling in until 6:20, you are well on your way to pissing off someone trying desperately to stuff his money into your pockets.

For about two years I had a customer named Rick who, each night at 5:55, would tell his wife he was going out to buy Skoal and would be right back. I don't know how she could imagine that any one consumed that much smokeless tobacco, but that was his story each night, and if it kept him in good with the wife, so be it. The point here is that she may have believed his story of needing a new can of dip, but she wouldn't have believed it took him 45 minutes to go to the corner store and return. It was very important to Rick that the phones be answered when he called in each night at 6:01. Over the course of those two years, he lost (and paid) almost \$9,000 . . . and he never wagered more than \$100 on a game in that entire time.

"Those little \$50 and \$100 players aren't even worth having," I was once told by my buddy Harley, who runs a reasonably successful book in Athens, Georgia. Well, not only are they worth having, they are worth busting your ass over. Open on time.

## ALLOWING TIME FOR PREPARATION

This brings us to an important point about preparation for a shift. If you will look back over the previous paragraph, we talked about "opening on time" and to do that you will need to "be on time." Some bookies (and at least one ex-clerk of mine) think being on time just means getting there before the shift is supposed to start. Not true. "Being on time" means arriving at the office at least 30 minutes before the shift is scheduled to begin. An 11:55 arrival for a noon shift means you will open late, as there is a decent amount of work to take care of before you actually turn on the phones. The checklist of things to be done before you can answer the first call of the day is as follows:

- First, you will need to turn on your computer, log on to your Internet service provider, and begin loading your real-time line updates program. The time from when you hit the switch on your Univac till up-to-the-minute lines appear on

your screen is about four minutes, if you can log on to the Internet on the first try (good luck with AOL) and if the server for your lines provider is trouble free (most of the time, but it seems to go down at the worst possible moments). On bad days it may take 10 minutes for the system to be active, and you need to be prepared for each day to be a bad day.

- The last 10 or so minutes before a shift is not the time to be updating the paysheet for the current day. We cover this in more detail in Chapters 7 and 8, but the rule to go by is that when you turn the doorknob and enter the office, all work from the previous day's action should be complete.
- As the computer is whirring away trying to provide you with updated odds, you will need to make sure you have sufficient rice paper sheets divided in half and lined off with blue ink. You always line off the rice paper into five columns (you only need to draw four lines on the page to do that), with each column the same width as one of those oversized 12-inch plastic see-through rulers (about 1 3/4 inches).
- Once the computer is showing the updated lines for that day's action, you will need to copy down the lines at which each game opened. Typically, each game will have an overnight line that came out 12 to 16 hours before that contest is scheduled to start. After copying all of the opening lines, you will want to write down all of the current lines. If a game has moved just a point or so, that can be accounted for by the betting public loading up on one side and Vegas moving the line to try and entice folks to play the other side.

If, however, a game has moved 4 1/2 points, for instance, you may want to investigate the injuries or suspensions or similar personnel moves by the teams involved. Also, if the Denver Nuggets were playing at home versus San Antonio and the current line had Denver favored by 5, while the opening line had Denver -6.5, I would typically post the game at Denver -5.5. Usually what will happen is that a game will open (be listed on the Vegas boards) at a

certain number and then within a few hours the line will shift by a point or two as the public bets one way or the other. Almost without fail, as game time approaches, the line will fall back about a half-point toward the opening line. You account for this little hiccup in advance by comparing the opening line (from about 2 **A.M.**) to the current line (6 **P.M.**) and seeing how the number has moved. This is obviously a hypothetical example, as it has been a couple of decades since Denver has been favored over anyone.

- After writing down what you will list each game at that night, you will need to make the tape. We covered the basics of the tape in Chapter 2, but all we are talking about is having a phone number your customers can call each night to get the current lines on a recorded message. Tuesday night during basketball or baseball season? You can usually make the tape in three to four minutes. A college football Saturday? It might take 10 minutes, so you need to make sure you have plenty of time in case you make a mistake and need to re-record the lines. More about the tape later in this chapter.
- If you use a phone-number relay system (your customers call a line across town somewhere that you forward to your location), that will take another minute or so to activate.

All totaled, there's about 20 minutes of work to do in preparation for the shift, and that is if nothing goes sideways on you. Things do go wrong every so often, and it may require only one day of your being lazy or taking shortcuts to anger the wrong customer and start him playing with another bookie. Treat this as a real job and you can prosper.

## MAKING THE TAPE

Making the tape is something that seems simple and it is. There are, however, a few points to be covered that will ensure your tape is done properly. The first of those is checking the accuracy of the information you record.

After dialing the number that your customers call to get the recorded message, you will punch in a security code, and that will allow you to change the information on the tape. After you have recorded the lines for that day's games, you should page your fax clerk with a code telling him that the tape is ready to be checked. He should also have the same real-time gambling software on his computer that you have on the computer in the office. As you are arriving at the office and loading the current lines, he will be doing the same thing at his location. Once you have paged him, he will call the tape and listen to your message for the day, all the while comparing what he hears you say on the tape to what he sees on his computer. After listening to the tape, he will call you (or the clerk) at the office and either give the thumbs-up or tell you what the mistake was. This is yet another reason you need to arrive at the office early. Sometimes you will need to re-record the tape, and you don't need to be attempting that at 5:59. Hell, by that time, Rick has already put in a fresh dip and started fishing for coins for the pay phone.

Occasionally the fax clerk will be checking the tape and see where you have listed a game that should be -4.5 as -5.5, and he may just make sure you did that intentionally. Most often, however, any mistake on the tape will be one where Dallas is playing at San Diego and is favored by 4.5 and you have read off the game as San Diego is the favorite by 4.5 points. That is what is called having a game upside down, and there is bookie/gambler etiquette that you don't get action on an upside-down game. Most folks abide by that, but some don't. The only way to make sure you don't put yourself in a bad position because of your error on the tape is to have someone double-check. I had a fax clerk named Blue who had a somewhat lengthy list of responsibilities, but at the top was for him to make sure I didn't make mistakes. He did such a good job of it that he currently works for the two ex-clerks of mine who now run the business.

What should you say on the tape? Follow the basic script below and you will never have a complaint from the customers.

## IN THE OFFICE

1. The day and date—"Tuesday May 9th."
2. Hours for that day—"Tuesday May 9th, we will be in the office today from noon until 1:00 and back tonight from 6:00 to 7:30." If it is the last (or only) shift of the day, you will also include the hours of operation for the following day: "Tuesday May 9th, we will be in the office tonight from 6:00 to 7:30 and back tomorrow from noon until 1:00 and 6:00 to 7:30."
3. The lines—You will then read off the current lines in the following order (for whatever sports are available that day):
  - a. college football
  - b. pro football
  - c. baseball
  - d. college basketball
  - e. pro basketball
  - f. hockey
  - g. any series bets

This is a rough sketch of the sports in order of popularity to the gambler. The script would now read as follows:

"Tuesday May 9th, we will be in the office today from noon until 1:00, back tonight from 6:00 to 7:30. Tonight in Major League Baseball, Pittsburgh 170 8- flat; Atlanta 155 7 under . . ." until all the current lines for the day have been read. Customers will use any excuse for a losing bet to be canceled. Don't let one of those excuses be that they couldn't understand you on the tape. Speak clearly and in an even tone.

4. The disclaimer—The disclaimer follows all lines for that tape, and either of the following will work:

"The preceding information is for news matter only," or (my preference) "This information is not intended to violate any federal, state, or local laws." Including the disclaimer was more habit on my part than anything else. If you are busted, having that message at the end of the tape may help you



explain to the judge a little bit that all you were doing was providing information about the day's games, but at that point it will be like pouring a cup of water on a forest fire. Under the premise of "every little bit helps," however, do include the disclaimer.

You have arrived at the office, turned on the computer, downloaded the lines, made the tape, and had the fax clerk check it. You are now ready to take action.



## CHAPTER 6

# Taking Action

*(and Making the Lines Work for You!)*

**W**hen you have turned on the phones and the shift has started, the first call you will receive most days will be from the fax clerk telling you that the tape is fine and doesn't need to be re-recorded. The fax clerk doesn't pay you thousands of dollars every year, but your customers do, so you should get off the phone with him as quickly as possible so that the lines will be available for taking wagers. When the phones start ringing, you should begin every call along the following lines:

Clerk: "Hello."

Caller: "This is 536."

Clerk: "Hello, 536, check your figure, sir."

Caller: "I have myself minus 885."

Clerk: "That's a check, 536. There are no changes. Go ahead with your plays, sir."

**VERY IMPORTANT THINGS FOR YOU TO DO**

1. *Make sure you repeat the caller's account number (536) as often as possible.* Most often you will recognize his voice and have no problem knowing who it is, but the more often you identify who you are speaking to, the less likely he will later say, "No, that wasn't me. I didn't make those plays."
2. *Always have the customer provide his figure.* If 536 had made the above call and his figure was actually only -785, you will tell him that and then take his plays for the day. There is no reason to ever cheat the customer like this. Customers will lose plenty of money to you gambling, no need to steal from them. If, however, you are the one always telling the customers what you show their figure at and one day it is off in their favor, almost all customers will say, "Yeah, that's a check." At that point, they just got a free \$100 or whatever the mistake was.
3. *Do not take plays until you and the caller have agreed on the figure.* If the customer were to say he was only down \$785, but you showed his figure as minus \$885, you need to pull out the work from the previous day and go over it with him on the phone until you agree on a figure.
4. *If it is an unfamiliar voice and you know it's not 536, you need to ask who is calling again.* Too many times a customer who is down will have someone else call and make plays so that, if the plays lose and he is down even more, he can say, "I didn't even call last night. I was at the Braves game and didn't play at all." The safeguard against that is being familiar with a customer's playing habits (e.g., number of bets each night, amount bet each night) and having the caller check the figure. Sometimes customers will have a friend call in for them, but if someone calls you and is able to provide an account number and the matching figure, those plays are valid. If you ever have doubts, don't hesitate to say, "You will need to have 536 call in and make these plays. As of

## TAKING ACTION

now, the account doesn't have any action tonight and won't until 536 calls."

Once the figure has been established, you are ready to take the plays. The plays need to be written on rice paper that has been lined off into five columns using blue ink. The plays will be written in black ink. The first thing you will do is write the account number and underline it. Then start writing the plays as he calls them out. It is always a good idea to repeat the plays to the customer one by one as you are writing them down. Even if you don't do this and just let him read off all his plays without calling them back at that time, something you *must* do is to repeat all the plays and the amounts wagered before you hang up. After you have read back the plays, *always* ask the customer, "Is this correct?"

## VERY IMPORTANT THINGS FOR CUSTOMERS TO UNDERSTAND

1. You only write down what they call out.
2. You only read back what is written down.
3. When you are reading back the plays, that is the last chance they have to say you have done something incorrectly.

You will be amazed how many callers think they have come up with a new lie. With Georgetown and Lasalle playing one another, the gambler bets heavy on Georgetown and loses. The next day, he calls to check in, and the figure is off. When you start going over his plays from the previous day, you get to the Georgetown bet and he pipes up with, "No, I didn't play Georgetown. I had Lasalle." If you follow the above script, then there is no way mistakes like that can be made. The deadbeat, loser, thief, bastard, son-of-a-bitch gambler is telling you that he said "give me Lasalle" and, after hearing him say "Lasalle," you wrote down "Georgetown" (strange how your hearing is messed up on that one play). But (this gets even better) when you called it back, you were staring at the word

*Georgetown* and the word *La Salle* is what you read back to him. Again, *it does not happen*.

Gamblers will swear, "Oh, no. I had La Salle." "Sir, I read it back to you and when I read back plays I read directly off the sheet that I write on while you are calling out your plays."

They really think there is some way they can convince you that they played the opposite side of a game. If the gambler knew not only how impossible it is for you to make that mistake but also that you know they are lying, most would crawl back under their rocks and disappear. The worst part about this is that they *really* believe if they insist enough times that they had the other side, you will think maybe you made the mistake. I have yet to have a gambler explain to me how, when reading back the plays, I can look at what I wrote and call back something completely different. "Well, I don't know, but I do know I had La Salle."

No, sir, you did not have La Salle. What you do have is a lie that I have heard hundreds of times before from losers just like you who also don't realize what kind of impossible BS they are trying to pass off as the truth. Another strange thing: this never happens on a play they lost that I marked as a winner, and it never happens to a customer who is owed money, only those who are down ... if you can't tell, this is a sore subject with me. The bottom line here is that the lying, thieving customers will steal from you if you give them the slightest chance. Eliminate a large number of those chances by repeating back the plays and then asking, "Is this correct?"

## THE SPECIFICS

We have covered some of the protocol about taking action, but we also need to talk about the specifics of what you actually write down to represent all the different types of plays. For the following examples, we will use the daily schedule from a college basketball Tuesday night from earlier this year. Also, we will refer to the sheet that plays for that night were written on.

### Schedule of Games

The first thing you need to look at is the schedule of the 20 college basketball games from that night. The point spreads have been written in, just as you would write them from the computer in the minutes leading up to the shift. As this is a completed schedule, the final scores are also written in the second column. Notice that game number 3-4 has North Carolina favored by 11 1/2

1. Georgia State  
 2. Georgia Tech 7  
 3. Virginia  
 4. North Carolina 11 1/2  
 5. Wake Forest 2  
 6. West Virginia  
 7. Florida State  
 8. Florida 9-  
 9. Vanderbilt  
 10. Duke 12  
 11. NC State  
 12. Maryland 3  
 13. South Carolina  
 14. Clemson 4-  
 15. St. Johns 1-  
 16. Temple  
 17. LaSalle  
 18. Georgetown 7  
 19. Pittsburgh  
 20. Syracuse 14  
 21. Notre Dame  
 22. Rutgers 9  
 23. Boston College  
 24. UConn 22  
 25. LSU  
 26. Arkansas 2-  
 27. Michigan  
 28. Ohio State 4  
 29. Iowa 1  
 30. Oklahoma State  
 31. Bowling Green  
 32. Miami-Ohio 3  
 33. TCU  
 34. Texas Tech 1  
 35. Baylor  
 36. SMU PK  
 37. Pepperdine  
 38. UCLA 7  
 39. Fresno State  
 40. San Jose State 11-

1. Georgia State 50  
 2. Georgia Tech 71  
 3. Virginia 51  
 4. North Carolina 48  
 5. Wake Forest 58  
 6. West Virginia 59  
 7. Florida State 42  
 8. Florida 63  
 9. Vanderbilt 57  
 10. Duke 60  
 11. NC State 49  
 12. Maryland 73  
 13. South Carolina 50  
 14. Clemson 51  
 15. St. Johns 62  
 16. Temple 58  
 17. LaSalle 51  
 18. Georgetown 53  
 19. Pittsburgh 49  
 20. Syracuse 68  
 21. Notre Dame 53  
 22. Rutgers 54  
 23. Boston College 60  
 24. UConn 91  
 25. LSU 62  
 26. Arkansas 65  
 27. Michigan 60  
 28. Ohio State 59  
 29. Iowa 53  
 30. Oklahoma State 48  
 31. Bowling Green 66  
 32. Miami-Ohio 71  
 33. TCU 58  
 34. Texas Tech 82  
 35. Baylor 71  
 36. SMU 70  
 37. Pepperdine 60  
 38. UCLA 67  
 39. Fresno State 57  
 40. San Jose State 66

points. We always represent a  $1/2$  point with  $1/2$ . If you are writing a play and a customer wants a wager for \$150, you will represent that as  $1\ 1/2$ . Again, a half-point is made with a minus sign, a half-hundred with " $1/2$ ."

Next, you need to look closely at the filled-in sheet. These are the plays that were called in during about the first 20 minutes of that night's shift. The rice paper has been lined off into five columns, and I had specified blue ink for the lines on the paper and black ink for the plays, but as long as the lines and the plays are in different colors, you can use any color ink you choose. You want to avoid any stray marks on the sheet that are written in the same color as the plays. You will also not want to grade the sheet with the same color ink in which you write the plays.

Account 536 was the first call of the night, and his plays were simple enough. Georgia Tech for a dollar (\$100), North Carolina for  $1\ 1/2$ , Wake for 1 and Duke for 2, buying a half-point. Remember that customers can buy a half-point in college hoops, and you always write the odds next to that play (in this case, 240/2). 202 was next, and his call was kinda plain, just three plays and buying the  $1/2$  point on two of them. 119 was the third call of the night, and he got Michigan +4 for 2, UCLA -7 for 7, and then put them together in a 2 dollar parlay.

Our first teaser for the night comes from our next caller, account number 530. He starts with Duke -12 for a nickel (\$500) and then has a nickel teaser with North Carolina and Michigan. As we covered in Chapter 1, a basketball teaser gives the customer 5 points per team. Michigan is now +9, with North Carolina -7 (remember that the customer loses any half-point in a basketball teaser).

651 also works a teaser tonight, but he "wheels" the lead team with five others. Georgia Tech is the lead team in this particular teaser, and he has wheeled it with North Carolina, Wake Forest, Michigan, UCLA, and Duke, giving him a total of five \$100 teasers. Customers may also want to wheel teams in a parlay. If someone ever wants to "wheel team X with the board," he is simply saying he wants to pair up team X in a parlay or teaser with every other team playing that night (yes, both sides of every game).

# TAKING ACTION

<u>536</u> Gtech -7 1 NC -11- 1 1/2 Wake -2 1 2 1/2 Duke -11- 2 1/2  <u>202</u> Wake -1- 12 1/2 Mich +4 5 UCLA -6- 5 1/2  <u>119</u> Mich +4 2 1/2 UCLA -7 7 1/2  <u>530</u> Duke -12 5 NC -7 5 1/2 Mich +9 5 1/2  <u>651</u> Gtech -2 1 1/2 W/ 1 1/2 NC -7 1 1/2 Wake +3 1 1/2 Mich +9 1 1/2 UCLA -2 1 1/2 Duke -7 1 1/2  <u>317</u> FSU +9- 2 1/2 OKst +1 2 1/2 Free +11- 2 1/2	<u>619</u> Iowa -1 1/2 Temple +1- 1/2 Iowa +4 1 1/2 Temple +6 1 1/2  <u>311</u> NC St. +3 1 1/2 FSU +9- 1 1/2 T. Tech -1 1/2  <u>295</u> GTown -7 10  <u>317</u> FSU +9- 2  <u>531</u> Syr -14 1 1/2 Rut -9 X 1 1/2 Duke -12 1 LSU +2- 10  <u>617</u> Syr -13- 12 1/2 Syr -14 1 1/2 GTown -7 1 1/2 Duke -12 1  <u>118</u> Bay +5 1 1/2 SMU +5 1 1/2	<u>299</u> Clem -4- 5 NC -11- 5 UCLA -7 5 Frez +11 5 Syr -14 5 Rut -9 5 Conn -22 5 Pitt -0-3 5 Duke -12 5  <u>450</u> -1171  <u>457</u> +1171  <u>315</u> Mary -3 2 May -2- 2 1/2  <u>621</u> Pitt +14 5 T. Tech -1 5  <u>620</u> Pitt +14 5 T. Tech -1 5  <u>615</u> Va +11- 1 Duke -12 1 Wash State +7 10	<u>438</u> Duke -12 5 Va +11- 5 Syr -14 5  <u>536</u> Conn -22 2 Vandy +13 2 1/2  <u>119</u> Temp +11- 3  <u>295</u> Clem -4- 3 1/2  <u>708</u> GTown -7 10 May -3 7 1/2  <u>298</u> Syr -14 1 1/2 LSU +2- 1 1/2 BG +3 1 1/2 SMU PK 1 1/2 BC +22 1 1/2  <u>536</u> Sy -13- 18 1/2  <u>317</u> Ark -2- 2
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Account 317 lets us see an example of a play taken the correct way. He has Florida State University (FSU) plus the points for 2 dollars and then his last play gives him Fresno State University (FSU?) plus the points for 2 dollars. To avoid confusion you should make sure you and the fax clerk have clear abbreviations and other varieties of shortened names for all the teams. "Frez" will have to suffice for the team from the West Coast.

Near the top of column 2 is the night's action for 311. He has a 3-team "round-robin parlay." That simply means that he will give you three teams and he wants all possible two-team parlays involving those three teams. A three-team round-robin will give the bettor three parlays; a four-team round-robin will give the bettor six parlays.

295 provides another example of why you must have a clear understanding with the fax clerk about which team is which. If an inexperienced clerk would have shortened Fresno State to "FSU," we



probably could have figured out what he meant by looking at the point spreads involved and seen that the real FSU was getting 9-points, while Frez was getting 11. What about Georgetown and Georgia Tech tonight? They could both be "GT" and, tonight, they are both favorites and both laying 7 points. *Make sure that you and the fax clerk are clear about how you will abbreviate teams.* True story: I fired a clerk the day after Tulane had played Tulsa, the game was pick 'em, and he wrote down everyone's play on that game as "Tul pk". I didn't like Gene much, anyway, so no big loss.

A few plays later, 531 calls and gets a two-team parlay. In the parlay, he has Syracuse on a straight play for a dollar, but nothing on the other team (Rutgers). If one team in a parlay has a straight play and the other team doesn't, mark the team without the straight with an "x" just to acknowledge that there is not supposed to be any play there. It's just a safeguard that may save you time in the grading later.

118 has done something interesting at the bottom of column 2. Actually, he has done something stupid, but that sounds a bit harsh. If you will check the line for game 35-36, you will see SMU and Baylor are a pick, and 118 has teased both sides of the same game. As was the case this night, 118 wins his play, but most often this is a gambler on his way to the poorhouse even quicker than most.

At the top of column 3 are 299's plays for the evening. He wagered a nickel on nine college games and, since he was kind enough to probably start his call with "all these will be for a nickel," we were able to save ourselves a little bit of writing and a little bit of ink by simply jotting the "5" with an arrow pointing down (as in, "This play is for \$500, and all following it are too.") The two boxes after 299 are an adjustment to the paysheet. 450 was a sub-book of mine, in charge of paying and collecting for about 30 customers. Apparently, he has seen account 457, and he collected \$1,171. Since 450 now has \$1,171 of the company's money (he "owes" the company that amount after having collected it), he is marked on the paysheet the same as if he lost a wager for \$1,171. Conversely, since 457 paid that amount, it is the same as if he won a wager for \$1,171.

Customer 315 was (probably still is) a weasel. He was more of a deadbeat shit-heel gambler than most of the customers and, since he always was hard to find when he owed me, he was put on a strict \$200 per play limit. His way around that was to do sneaky crap like playing Maryland for 2 dollars and then buying it down to -2- for another 2 dollars. That is definitely coloring outside the lines, and I later had to revise the rules for him so that he could only have a total of 2 dollars on any one team, regardless of how many wagers he wanted to include them in. I put the guidelines on him to try and keep his figure in check and avoid things like when he would be down \$4,000 on a Monday night and want to bet \$3,550 on one game to get under his \$500 settle-up figure. Putting him on a limit was the best thing I could have done for him. Like all gamblers, he loses, and by limiting his action to 2 dollars per play, I just helped him lose less money.

The plays in the two boxes under 315 are identical. A closer look shows that the two accounts wagering those identical plays are 620 and 621. You will have co-workers, brothers, best friends, etc., who always bet the same games for the same amounts every night. For accounts like 620 and 621 (nickels and up), you may want to keep an eye out for the first call and *maybe* raise the line on *one* of the games you know the next guy will play. You don't want to do it every night and you don't want to do it to every game you know he is calling to play. If he asks you about it, simply explain that if you begin getting a lot of action on one side of a game, you will adjust that game just like they do in Vegas. In reality, you are just trying to shave a half-point from a reasonably big-time bettor.

You can probably tell by a quick glance at the play sheet that a lot of customers are playing Duke. Because of that, I adjusted the line from Duke being -12 to Duke being -12-. The half-point isn't a huge deal, but it may make at least some people consider taking the other side. When you decide to move a spread, you will take out "there are no changes" in your greeting and substitute "make Duke 12-."

In the fourth column, 536 has gotten the verbal change and decided to not only take the dog now, but to buy it up to 13. If you look back at the first column where he played, he bet Duke and

bought it down. If Duke were to win this game by exactly 12 points, 536 would win both bets . . . but gamblers don't win, so we don't worry about that happening much.

When you read back the plays to the customer, you should always read them back in the style you would like them called out to you. In the fourth column, 298 has apparently called and has a list of games he wants for \$150 each. By about his fourth or fifth play, you realize all his plays are for a dollar and a half, but the way he is calling them out is each team, the points, and then "and give me that for \$150." This is a pain in the ass for you, because if you knew from the outset that all his plays would be for \$150, you could have written it similar to the way we did 299 in the previous column. To encourage him to read off his plays in a more expeditious manner, begin reading them back with, "OK, 298, you have all plays for \$150. Syracuse -14, LSU + 2- . . ." If he doesn't get the hint, you should go ahead and tell him it would make it easier if he told you at the beginning of the call when all of the wagers are for the same amount.

The sheet of plays you have here should give you a fair example of most of the nuances of taking plays. There are some other things to be aware of, most of them dealing with customer relations and how to avoid getting angry when the same callers do the same irritating stuff night after night.

Be prepared for nights when the phones sit silent for an hour or so and then turn into a Christmas tree the last three minutes before a big game kicks off. Customers think that waiting till the last second possible before making their plays will help them win. Nothing helps them win. They don't win. That's why they pay you and you get to go to Costa Rica while they get to go back to their jobs trying to earn more money to pay you. Keep that in mind when 22 straight customers tell you, "Hey, I have been trying to call, but the line's been busy." The answer you are tempted to offer up is, "Well, that's because you and all the other losers like you who gamble on sports are waiting until the last second before calling in your bets on the favorite." That is the answer you are tempted to give. The answer you actually give is, "Yes, sir. Go ahead with your plays, sir."

## KEEPING YOUR RELATIONSHIPS PROFESSIONAL

Something to always keep in mind is that you have an employee-customer relationship with the people who call in each night. This doesn't mean that you can't be friendly or personable with them, but remember that the reason they are calling is to make their wagers and the reason you are answering is to take those wagers. Be friendly, be polite, be courteous, but (above all) be businesslike. *Never* comment on a customer's plays or how he did the previous day. If he wants to comment about what a lousy day he had or how much he lost on the early shift that day, fine. You can respond with "Yes, sir," or "What would you like for tonight's action?" but the last thing you want to do is start chitchatting about bets that have already been determined. Also, when taking current plays, don't comment about what the customer has bet, regardless of how harmless the comments may seem to you. The customer may say, "I'm gonna try the Saints one more time. They stink, but I keep betting them." You may be tempted to reply with a friendly enough, "Well, maybe they will win today for you," but don't say it. Invariably, you will make a completely innocent remark that the customer will take the wrong way, and it could cost you money if he decides to play somewhere else or if it angers him enough that he decides not to pay you. There are two things working here:

1. A gambler's reaction after having lost bets can many times be irrational, having nothing to do with any harm in something you may have said.
2. Gamblers look for any reason not to pay you. Don't give them the excuse of "that clerk is a smartass—I'm not paying." The gambler will find plenty of reasons on his own to justify not paying. Don't help him out.

"Yes, sir," and "Go ahead with your plays for tonight, sir" are always safe responses. Use them frequently.

"This is 511. My buddy just called me, and he wants Penn State for \$300. . . ." You will get this call many times in the season,

a customer getting action for his friends. No problem there, as most often these friends become customers and get their own accounts. But these calls must be handled in a specific way to avoid two types of problems.

The first of these is when the customer slightly alters his words so that it sounds something like, "This is 511. My buddy called me, and I think he said he wanted Penn State for \$300." Make sure the customer understands that "I don't know what your friend wanted to get down on, but what *you* have is Penn State for \$300." You repeat this to him and, as always, end the call with, "Is this correct?"

You are wanting to make it as clear as possible to the caller that his contacting you later and saying his friend actually wanted Virginia, not Penn State, is his problem. "Sir, I have you down for Penn State -11 for 3 dollars. Is that correct?" Potential problem solved.

Calls like this can also be trouble brewing in another way: when the customer has had a horrible weekend of betting and calls on Monday night to tell you, "I have been putting these plays in for a friend of mine, and he says he doesn't have the money." The customer is lying, and, again, he thinks he has come up with something new and that you don't even know he is lying. Your response: "Sir, *you* called in these plays, and *you* are responsible for this money. Whatever you chose to do with a friend of yours is between you and him and has nothing to do with me. Tomorrow is settle-up day. What time do you want me to come by and pick up the money?"

Gamblers are just like children and will see just how far they can push you. If you get a reputation of someone who accepts fiction like, "I have been playing for a friend of mine .. .", you will soon be out of business. The "playing for a friend" lie is possibly the worst and second-most-often-told one by gamblers, just behind "My wife found my gambling schedule and the phone numbers. I have to stop playing or she is gonna leave me." Funny thing, *nobody's* wife ever finds their schedule and makes them stop when they are winning. Again, the gamblers really think they have fooled you. If they had any idea of how ridiculous they sound, they would stop using this

one. After saying this, not only are they deadbeats, they are now also liars. If you get in this business, you will have a caller use this excuse with you. How you react is up to you, but be sure to read Chapter 12 a few times before doing anything to exact justice.

Another habit of your customers that will test your patience is the gambler who has to call five times a night. Most often, this guy makes those five calls and ends up with about a nickel's worth of action. What he is doing is watching the lines, and if a line moves a half-point, he will call you immediately trying to get that game at the previous line. Because of the software you use, you will always have the more up-to-date lines, so callers should soon learn they will not get the old lines.

A variation on this is the gambler who plays \$50 a game and will call at night just before the 7:05 games and say, "Let me go ahead and get these early ones in." He will then wait until just before the 7:30 games and call back and say, "I'm ready for the late stuff now." He likes thinking that he is being cutting-edge by waiting until the last possible moment to call in, lest any of the lines should move. It is slightly ridiculous for somebody playing \$50 per to call four or five times a night trying to get the most up-to-the-second lines, but this type of gambler will end up paying you much coin. It's OK to laugh to yourself; just don't let him hear.

Something we have already talked about is opening on time. Equally important is that you close on time. If your customers know you end the shift promptly at 7:30, then they will get that late call in at 7:29. If you stay open a few times until 7:35, then they will start expecting it and will bitch up a storm that they called the previous night at 7:35 and couldn't get their plays in. Also, customers who do wait until 7:29 to start calling in their final plays will sometimes not get through. When they complain the next night, tell them that they should call earlier. You shouldn't be rude about it, but this scenario will present itself to you. Be prepared.

Take a second and look at the bottom right corner of the play sheet. You will see a small " 1 " with a circle around it. You will want to number your sheets so that if you need to go back and

double-check something later, you and the fax clerk will be able to find more quickly by saying, "Look on sheet seven in column 3 at 488's plays\_\_\_\_\_"

The subtitle of the chapter is "Making the Lines Work for You," and there are several points to be made regarding that. The first and most important and most invariable is that customers play favorites. Every night you will have much more action bet on all the favorites, and this puts you in the situation of knowing on what teams your customers will wager before they have even called. Customers are weak and don't do a lot of thinking for themselves. They will scour every statistic available looking for the slightest hint about which team is more likely to win and, after doing this for hours, still call and bet the biggest favorites on the board.

As we discussed earlier in our section on baseball, customers will not risk their money on teams that are supposed to lose. They lose sight of the fact that the point spread and/or odds account for horrible teams usually getting beat. All they can focus on is that "San Francisco is really good, and the Bears suck. Give me the 'Niners for \$1,000." To be totally accurate, the caller should have said, "Give me the 'Niners minus the 19 points for \$1,000." Knowing that every gambler will want to bet the favorites means that you should have the lines slightly tilted against the favorites even more. The above-mentioned San Francisco-Chicago game probably had a line of 17- or 18. You post it at 19, and the callers still can't make their bets on Frisco fast enough. Even better, some of your customers will ask for "San Fran for \$1,000, and I want to buy it down to 18-." This means that the customer is now risking double juice, and he still hasn't even gotten the line down to where it should be.

The bottom line to you? Gamblers bet favorites, and they will do it every night, without exception. Use this to your advantage. While the 17- game goes to 19, the 4- game might only go to 5. The point is that the slightest change in the line in your favor will greatly increase your profits. "What if I change the line, and the caller knows the line has been upped and then plays the underdog?" He won't. Gamblers play favorites. Every night. Every game.

## TAKING ACTION

On the subject of tweaking lines, it never hurts to change a football or basketball favorite from an even number (e.g., 11 or 12) to being favored by "X" and a half. Gamblers love to tease down favorites, and if Green Bay is favored by 13, he can use them in a 3-teamer and tease them down to -3. If, however, the Packers are favored by 13-, the teaser only goes down to -4, as the gambler always loses the half-point. The best part about this is that if a different customer decides to tease the underdog, his points in the teaser are not affected (+13 and +13- both are +23 in a teaser).

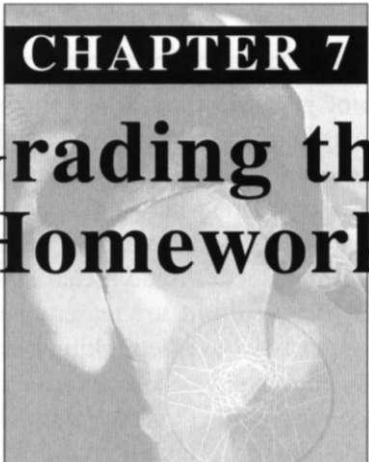
If you are looking at the computer at the beginning of a shift and see a game as Houston, for example, -190, you should put Houston on the tape as -200. A guideline to go by in baseball is that you don't list favorites at -190. If you list them at -190, the underdog pays back +180. Listing the favorite at -200, however, only pays back the underdog +185. By skipping all the way to -200, you get an extra 10 cents on the price of the favorite, while only having to give up an extra 5 cents to the underdog.

The same principle applies to a -115 favorite, where the underdog pays back +105. You can either put this line up as -120, paying back +110 or (one of my personal favorites) list the game as both sides -110. You have only dropped the price of the slight favorite by 5 cents, while getting a whopping 15 cents more on the other team. Every little bit helps, so keep this in mind when posting your baseball lines. (For more specifics regarding baseball lines and the difference between what the favorite must lay and what the underdog takes, refer back to Chapter 1.)

One final item for your consideration. There is a group of wagers for the Super Bowl called "exotics." These are the bets of which player will score the first touchdown, how many total field goals will be made in the game, whether there will be a score in the final two minutes of the first half, etc. Hell, your customers can bet which team wins the coin toss. When these wagers become available following the AFC and NFC title games, get a list of them printed and make sure your customers get that list. You will make money dealing exotics. *You will make lots of money dealing exotics.* In the days



leading up to the Super Bowl, spend a great deal of your time letting your customers know that those bets are available. It will be worth every second.



## CHAPTER 7

# Grading the Homework

**T**his may seem like a fairly simple chapter, but do pay attention. All that is asked of you (or the clerk or whoever grades the work each night) is the ability to add, subtract, and sometimes do a smidgen of multiplication. God was kind enough to provide us with adding machines, so you've got a decent start here.

The thing to remember about grading each night is exactly what we just said: all that is required is addition, subtraction, and a bit of multiplication—not very high-skill tasks. But while you aren't being asked to fly the space shuttle, grading the work has to be done perfectly. If a customer calls in and the figure he says is not the figure you have for him on the paysheet, it has to be his mistake every time. If you don't make any mistakes with the grading or with the paysheets, it will instill a sense of trust among the callers. After a few months of running my own show, we had gotten to the point where if a customer didn't have the same figure for himself that we did, he would say, "We'll just go with what you have. Y'all are always right, anyway," and that's the way it should be. The customers need to have confidence in your operation, and always having the paperwork done correctly is the most visible way to begin achieving that.

For the basics of grading, we will use the playsheet we talked about in the previous chapter. Go through and attempt to do the grading right now. Let's see what you come up with. . . .

You should now compare what you came up with against the completed playsheet also provided you. *All* the individual accounts *and* the final tally for that sheet should match exactly. If you had any problems, the most likely culprits are teasers, parlays, and the buying of half-points. That is why, when taking plays or at least at the end of the shift, you should always use a yellow highlighter to mark through both the account number and any parlays or teasers or buys.

Highlighting the account number makes it easier to separate those numbers from the ones actually used in the plays when you are going back trying to locate a specific gambler's wagers from the night before. When account number 418 says his figure is off, it will be much easier for you to find an individual account if those numbers have been highlighted. Highlighting the teasers and parlays (collectively known as propositions or "props") and "buys" (buying of half-points) is done purely to remind you that these are not normal plays and to pay at least an extra second of attention to them. Why a yellow highlighter? Because yellow is the only color that doesn't block out what is written underneath when you fax the sheets to the other clerk at the end of the shift.

Other problems in grading come from forgetting to figure in 10 percent on losing plays or to figure in the correct odds associated with baseball favorites that lose or baseball underdogs that win. Of course, sometimes you just have a brain spasm and, for just a second, something in your gray matter tells you that  $\$180 + \$200 = \$20$ . Also, there will occasionally be times when you count both sides of a particular game as a winner or both sides as a loser. Writing this chapter I am starting to remember all the different ways I fouled up the grading, so let's move on.

*Important point that James wants you to remember: Do the grading right. Every time. Every play. Every night.*



## CHAPTER 8

# The Paysheet

*(Read This One Twice!)*

**T**he ledger containing all of your business' financial information is referred to as the paysheet. It is simply a listing of all the account numbers down the left margin with any negative balances listed on the left side of the page and any positive balances listed toward the right. The paysheet is updated with each night's results using simple double-entry bookkeeping. What you need to remember is that if any amount of money is added or subtracted from anywhere on the sheet, the same amount has to be added or subtracted somewhere else on the paysheet. For the most part, money doesn't really leave the paysheet; it just kinda gets moved around.

We have included a sample paysheet and will update it using the figures for the night's action from Chapter 6. Until the past few years, all gambling operations would keep their records on paysheets. Most now use one of the many computer programs dedicated to this, but we will at least cover the basics of manual updates so as to prepare for the early stages of your business when being careful with your funds may prevent you from purchasing a computer or the software needed to keep your records on disk.

<p>536 -150</p> <p>Gtech -7 1 W</p> <p>NC -11- 1 1/2 W</p> <p>Wake -2 1 1/2 L</p> <p>Duke -11- 2 1/2 L</p> <p>202 +880</p> <p>Wake -1- 1 1/2 L</p> <p>Mich +4 5 W</p> <p>UCIA -6- 5/5 W</p> <p>119 +384</p> <p>Mich +4 W 2 1/2</p> <p>UCIA -7- 7 1/2</p> <p>530 -50</p> <p>Duke -12 5 L</p> <p>NC -7 5/5 W</p> <p>Mich +9 5/5 W</p> <p>651 +290</p> <p>Gtech -2 1 W</p> <p>VC -7 1 W</p> <p>Wake +3 1 W</p> <p>Mich +9 1 W</p> <p>UCIA -2 1 W</p> <p>Duke -7 1 L</p> <p>317 -340</p> <p>FSU +9- 1 1/2</p> <p>OKst +1 L 2 1/2</p> <p>Free +11- 2 1/2 W</p>	<p>619 +1-0</p> <p>Temple +1- 1 1/2</p> <p>Iowa +4 1 1/2</p> <p>Temple +6 1 1/2</p> <p>311 -300</p> <p>NC St. +3 1 1/2</p> <p>FSU +9- 1 1/2</p> <p>T. Tech -1 1 1/2</p> <p>295 -1100</p> <p>Gtown -7 10</p> <p>317 -220</p> <p>FSU +9- 2</p> <p>531 -110</p> <p>Syr -14 1 1/2</p> <p>Rut -9 1 1/2</p> <p>Duke -12 1 L</p> <p>-1100</p> <p>708</p> <p>FSU +2- 10</p> <p>617 -110</p> <p>Syr -13- 1 1/2</p> <p>Syr -14 1 1/2</p> <p>Gtown -7 1 1/2</p> <p>Duke -12 1 L</p> <p>118 +100</p> <p>Bay +5 1 1/2</p> <p>SMU +5 1 1/2</p>	<p>299 +850</p> <p>Clem -4- 2 1/2</p> <p>NC -11- 1 W</p> <p>Gett -7 1 1/2</p> <p>Free +11 W</p> <p>Syr -14 1 W</p> <p>Rut -9 1 L</p> <p>Conu -22 W</p> <p>Mia -0-3 W</p> <p>Duke -12 1 L</p> <p>450 -1171</p> <p>-1171</p> <p>457 +1171</p> <p>+1171</p> <p>315 +400</p> <p>May -3 2</p> <p>May -2- 2 1/2</p> <p>621 -50</p> <p>Pitt +14 5 L</p> <p>T. Tech -1 5 W</p> <p>620 -50</p> <p>Pitt +14 5 L</p> <p>T. Tech -1 5 W</p> <p>615 -220</p> <p>Va +11- 1 L</p> <p>Duke -12 1 L</p> <p>296 +1000</p> <p>Lasalle +1 10</p>	<p>438 -600</p> <p>Duke -12 5 L</p> <p>Va +11- 5 L</p> <p>Syr -14 5 W</p> <p>536 +400</p> <p>Con -22 2 W</p> <p>Vandy +13 2 1/2 W</p> <p>119 -330</p> <p>Temp +1- 3</p> <p>295 -385</p> <p>Clem -4- 5 1/2</p> <p>708 -350</p> <p>Gtown -7 10 L</p> <p>May -3 7 1/2</p> <p>298 -510</p> <p>Syr -14 1 1/2 W</p> <p>LSU +2- 1 1/2 L</p> <p>BB +3 1 1/2 L</p> <p>SMU PK 1 1/2 L</p> <p>BC +22 1 1/2 L</p> <p>536 +150</p> <p>Sy -13- 1 1/2</p> <p>317 +200</p> <p>Ark -2- 2</p>
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When grading the homework each night, it is best to start by making a list of all the accounts who played that night. You can start on a scratch sheet of paper and simply start copying down the accounts who had called in, while leaving enough room between numbers to fill in more accounts as you get to them. On the sample of the evening tally sheet, you can see where I did this down the far left margin. You then write the accounts in order and start filling in the amounts they won or lost on each call. You can see that account 118 only called once and won \$100 on that call. His total for the night is +\$100, so that number goes on the far right of the

## THE PAYSHEET

evening tally sheet. If you will look down to the summary of account 317's action for the night, you can see he made three separate calls. On the first call he lost \$340, on the second he lost another \$220, and on his final call for the night he won back \$200. That gives him a net figure for the night of -\$360, as we have noted on the tally sheet. You do this for all the calls for that night's action and then get a total for the night. On this particular evening, the

### PAYSHEET A

118	332	
119	845	
202		2,105
295	2,200	
296	305	
298		431
299	2,385	
311	45	
315	1,198	
317	81	
438		1,970
450	3,155	
457	1,171	
530	119	
531	430	
536		205
615	690	
617		184
619		193
620	95	
621	105	
651	370	
708	1,935	
100	17,390	
Com		27,763

company wins \$1,321. You would then take out the paysheet and begin updating it to include the + or - from that day.

Look at paysheet A that is included. The individual account numbers are underlined and listed down the left margin. The numbers listed almost next to the accounts are the monetary amounts those accounts have lost and owe the company. Figures listed a bit farther to the right are monetary amounts that those customers have won and, thus, are owed by the company. As will be the case at all times, there are far more figures on the left than on the right. The last two figures shown are for account 100 (me) and for "Com" (the company). According to these figures, I would owe the company \$17,390. Obviously, I have not lost this much gambling. The figure for 100 (the boss) is the total amount of money that he has collected from customers up to that point in the season. The reason you need to keep accurate records of how much you have collected is because there will be bonuses to pay out to the employees at season's end.

Let's begin updating the paysheet to include the action from the previous night. The first thing you should do is make sure you have an adding machine with plenty of tape in it. In this business, you are much better off using an adding machine instead of a calculator. Accountants use adding machines and, as we stated, updating the paysheet is merely a form of bookkeeping, so you should use one also.

There are very few pitfalls to be aware of if you use an adding machine for every account. Where you get into problems is when you see addition easy enough to figure in your head, so you don't actually do it on the machine. The trouble comes when you forget you are dealing with positive and negative numbers. For example, account 531 enters the night at -430. Let's say he wins \$100. Sometimes you will list him on the updated sheet as -530 and the paysheet will then be off by \$200. Or he may have started -430 and won \$500. His figure should now be on the right at +\$70, but if you don't use the adding machine for every update, occasionally you will list him as -70 or -930 or even +930. You will spend a lot of time looking for your mistake, so it is advisable to use the extra three seconds it takes and do every calculation on the adding machine.

**THE PAYSHEET**

**PAYSHEET B**

<b>118</b>	<b>232</b>	
<b>119</b>	<b>791</b>	
<b>202</b>		<b>2,985</b>
<b>295</b>	<b>3,685</b>	
<b>296</b>		<b>695</b>
<b>298</b>	<b>79</b>	
<b>299</b>	<b>1,535</b>	
<b>311</b>	<b>345</b>	
<b>315</b>	<b>798</b>	
<b>317</b>	<b>441</b>	
<b>438</b>		<b>1,370</b>
<b>450</b>	<b>4,326</b>	
<b>457</b>		
<b>530</b>	<b>169</b>	
<b>531</b>	<b>540</b>	
<b>536</b>		<b>605</b>
<b>615</b>	<b>910</b>	
<b>617</b>		<b>74</b>
<b>619</b>		<b>193</b>
<b>620</b>	<b>145</b>	
<b>621</b>	<b>155</b>	
<b>651</b>	<b>80</b>	
<b>708</b>	<b>3,385</b>	
<b>100</b>	<b>17,390</b>	
<b>Com</b>		<b>29,084</b>

You will find out if you have made a mistake when you perform the last task of the night after updating the paysheet. You end the evening by adding all the figures on the right and making sure that it matches the total of all the figures on the left. If they don't match (if the paysheet doesn't balance), you have made a mistake somewhere and need to go find it. If you don't bother to make sure the paysheet balances (a mistake) and you are in the habit of telling your cus-



tomers what their figures are when they call in (a bigger mistake), you will give away more money than you ever imagined for no other reason than simple mistakes in addition and subtraction.

You should update paysheet A and compare your results with the paysheet B, also provided to you. If there is a mistake, go back and find it and make the correction. It will help you quite a bit if you actually have the adding machine printing to tape while you are balancing the paysheet. To help you out, both sides of paysheet A should equal 32,851. After updating it, the totals for the paysheet (paysheet B) should both equal 35,006.

*Most important thing in this chapter.* The paysheet has to balance every night. If the paysheet doesn't balance, you have made a mistake in your addition or subtraction. Don't go to bed if the paysheet doesn't balance. Don't tell yourself that you will get up and do it before the noon shift the next morning. The paysheet is the most important document you have related to the company, and it has to balance perfectly every night. Make sure it does.

## CHAPTER 9

# Settle-Up Day



**T**uesday morning of each week will begin an extremely busy two-day period for you and, possibly, a clerk or two. It is "settle-up day," and all customers who are at or above their settle-up figure must be seen to zero their account. This is when you pay and collect, and it is usually the only time you see your customers face-to-face.

One of the questions people ask is, "Why Tuesday?" It's not just an arbitrary decision, and it actually goes against what most bookies do, as the majority use Monday as settle-up day. Their reasoning is that Monday begins a new week on the calendar and that's when we begin our week, too. Others feel that after a complete weekend of games, more customers will be above their figure, either paying or collecting, than at any other time of the week. Whatever their reasons, most bookies settle-up on Mondays. In this case, most bookies are wrong.

The main reason you will begin seeing your customers on Tuesday instead of Monday is the same reason behind most of my decisions: profit. The only reason I was in this game was to put cash

in my pocket, and settling on Tuesdays is much better for that purpose. The reasons? Well, you need to start with some of the basic truths about sports gambling. The first of those is that, at any given time, you will have more of your customers owing you money than vice versa. Given that, you need to remember that on the last night of the gambling week, customers who are down will almost always bet just enough to get under their figure, and thus avoid having to pay you. Since we already know from Chapter 6 that customers always play favorites, you are now in a very powerful position. You have desperate people calling to gamble on sports, and you already know who they want to bet on and how much they are going to wager. You should take great advantage of this situation, and you do that by adjusting the lines.

If your settle-up day is Monday, then the last day for customers to get under their figure is Sunday, and nearly every team in every sport plays on Sunday. It is much harder to tweak the lines when there are 45 games than if you make the last day of your week Monday, when there will be about half as many games available to your callers. This is especially true during football season. If your last day is Monday, then there is only one game in town, and you can do a much more effective job adjusting the lines with only one game. Go ahead and check the Major League Baseball schedules. Almost like clockwork, the leagues cut Monday games in half once football season begins.

If the last day of your week is Monday, this works to your advantage. You should increase the line on the favorite by a half-point from the outset. If the Monday night game has Dallas as a 9-point favorite at home versus New Orleans and that is the only game available, every customer who is down will come rolling in on Dallas. People who owe money and are about to wager even more money to try and get out of the hole are not prone to making that desperate "I have to win!" bet on a team that is supposed to get its ass kicked. It just doesn't happen. Go ahead and make it 9 1/2. Many of those customers will pay double juice to buy it back down to where it was supposed to be in the first place, so at the

## SETTLE-UP DAY

very least you have just earned a potential extra 10 percent from many of them if Dallas should fail to cover.

Regardless of whether they do buy the half-point, however, when you turn the phones on at about 6:00, they will immediately light up with the customers who are trying to bet on Dallas. Why do they want to so desperately get their bet in on Dallas as soon as possible? Because loser, degenerate gamblers are at least astute enough to know that everybody else who is down is also going to play Dallas, and they want to get the Cowboys before you move it up to 10 or 10 1/2. By 6:30, approximately 75 percent of your callers for the night have already called in to bet the favorite. Your smarter callers, the ones who know you inflated the line because all the losers will play the favorite, also know that the volume of betting you are sure to get on Dallas will cause you to raise the line even further. They want to bet New Orleans and, thus, won't call for an hour or so. How do you react to that? Beginning about 7:30, change the line back down to 9. Like clockwork, *every week* I changed lines at those times. By doing that, I beat the customers based on the simple fact that the night before settle-up only exaggerates people's betting habits and none of this is possible if, during football season, your week ends on Sunday.

Another reason you will not want to end your week on Sunday is because of the sheer number of wagers you will have to process on Sunday night/early Monday morning. On settle-up day you need to be up and doing business by 7 A.M. **YOU** won't feel like doing much of anything if you have stayed up until 4:00 doing the paperwork on an entire Sunday's worth of games. Having a clerk will alleviate this part of it, but the more tired the people doing the grading are, the more likely they will make mistakes. Very few mistakes are made if there is only one game on the schedule.

In addition, by settling on Tuesday, you give your customers who are way in the hole an entire day to visit their financial institution, thus eliminating one of the most popular excuses for not having the cash to pay their debts (more about excuses a little farther down). Additionally, many holidays occur on Mondays, and if you

are running around town trying to see people at their places of business and those businesses are closed, no money goes into your pocket. Memorial Day, Labor Day, and King Day (Martin Luther Jr., not Elvis), as well as a host of others, are observed on Monday. Again, we are in this to make a tax-free, cash income, and settling on Tuesday is best for that purpose.

With that determined, we need to discuss your schedule for settle-up day. Your fax clerk and one of your office clerks (or you, in the early stages of the business) will have completed the paperwork from the previous night, and the updated paysheet will be printed. One of the clerks will then fax you a copy at your home, and by 7 A.M. you are on the road.

Many of your customers will have a preference for where they want to pay or collect. Many don't mind if you drop by their office, while some always meet you in the Sears parking lot near the package pickup lane. Regardless, you always pay any customers due to collect as early as possible on Tuesday morning. People get jumpy if they are owed money and think for even the slightest reason that you are trying to get out of paying them. Those due money are the ones at the top of your list to see.

While taking care of those customers, you also need to call any sub-books and tell them which of their customers need to be seen and how much is due to be paid to or collected from them. As the sub-books go about the business of paying and collecting, they should get in touch with you after each transaction so that you can make the appropriate changes on your copy of the paysheet. As you get changes, call the fax clerk and make sure that he also updates the paysheet that he keeps in his computer. Tuesdays involve a lot of calling, a lot of updating, and, most important, a lot of money. Be professional and work your rear end off on Tuesdays. Your customers will notice, and many will try to repay the courtesy when it is their turn to pay.

Even though Tuesdays will only find you with 20 or so people who need to be paid (based on a 200-customer business), most likely that will consume your entire day. Some of the sub-books will also

## SETTLE-UP DAY

need to be seen, as they may either need to get some money from you if one of their customers had a particularly good week and they don't have the available cash, or if they have just collected \$10,000 to \$12,000, for example, and want to go ahead and divide that up. Either way, you will have customers to see in person, as well as employees. Start early and get your customers paid.

The slightly more tiresome exercise will begin on Tuesday night and continue through Wednesday, as you now start collecting from those who owe. It will be more tiresome as you will have five to six times as many people to see and, depending on the quality of people you have on your paysheet, it could continue well past Wednesday. There is a very important point to be made here. The ease with which you will collect is directly related to the type of people you are doing business with. Professional, well-educated, well-paid sports fans like to gamble as much as anyone else, and they give you the best chance of getting paid what you are owed. Understand that there is a huge difference between a customer having the money to pay and the customer actually paying, but if you subscribe to the idea of "surround yourself with good people," you do increase your odds.

Most customers think that the bookie is making TONS of money (and they are right, actually), so "my not paying this little \$1,200 I owe is no big deal." While \$ 1,200, for example, should never make a noticeable difference in your cash flow, it is kind of like littering. One person dropping a McDonald's bag out the window may not seem like much, but if a big deal is not made about it then everybody will start throwing them out the window and pretty soon you have made the Indian cry.

Most of your customers either know or work with other customers and, if someone has shown an unwillingness to pay, you can adopt the "I owe your co-worker Steve \$1,200 and you owe me the same. You just pay him, and I will zero you both out on the paysheet." Steve is the guy's buddy. He can be much more of a pain in the ass (and get away with it) than can you. The bottom line is that most of your customers should pay their debts, but some don't. They may tell you they can get it to you next week, or

next month, or at the end of January when they get their bonus, or blah, blah, blah. The best thing you can do is continue to pay in full and on time and never give the customers any justification for withholding payment from you.

If eight to ten of your customers all work at the same restaurant or law firm or hotel or whatever, you should have one of that group of people as the point man for all those accounts. You will call him on Tuesday morning and run down all the figures for the people at the location. When you arrive there, you can just meet him and he will give you an envelope with the net losses for the entire group, or you can give him an envelope if the group is a net winner for the week (not likely). This is just extending the Steve example from above by several people, though it is not done out of effort to collect a bad debt. This is a way you can zero out 10 accounts by seeing one customer. At the end of the season, the customer who does this for you will usually get a small amount of cash in a separate envelope that is his to keep. If he is a typical customer (playing \$100 to \$200 a game) and you give him \$500 for having done this each Tuesday during the season, he will think it's all the money D.C. ever printed. Sometimes he will ask you to just start his account for the next season as + \$500. Hey, no problem. He will lose it, probably within the first week.

Sometimes a customer who has seen you every Wednesday for two years may call you on a Wednesday morning and say he needs to see you on Thursday, instead. Many times he will, in fact, see you on Thursday . . . until probably the next weekend, at which time he will suggest rolling over the figure until the next week (see above). Usually a customer who doesn't call all week will precede his suggestion to roll it over by telling you he has been out of town all week or his mother is sick or she is dead or she is dead but is getting better or the dog ate his homework or any one of many other excuses you care equally little about. He is lying, and you know he is lying and this is possibly one of the worst jobs of lying in the history of lying, but you know what? The customer actually thinks he has come up with something that you have never heard before and that you

## SETTLE-UP DAY

really believe him. Strange how no one who is ever up a ton of money suddenly has to go out of town and can't see you.

Occasionally, you will have customers wanting to give you checks. Proceed with caution, as checks leave paper trails. This is another instance of when you feel like reminding the customer of how you always pay him (on time, in full, and in cash). It's OK to want to say this, just don't say it. Depending on how good of a relationship you have with this customer, you may want to accept the check and have no fears of its bouncing or leading any type of law enforcement to you. I had one customer who owned 51 auto parts stores and routinely wrote me checks for \$20,000 to \$25,000. No problem there. For the most part, however, remind the customer that cash is always the right color, the right pattern, fits perfectly, never needs to be returned, and is the preferred way of doing business.

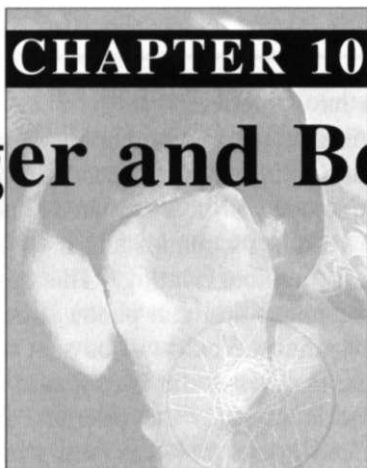
When collecting money, treat people the way you would like to be treated. Be reasonable, be fair, be willing to set up payment plans if need be. Do *not* only think that you have "always paid them when they were owed and never been late. . . ." That will only anger you, and you do stupid things when you are angry. If somebody is down \$4,000 and doesn't have it but wants to start payment plans of \$200 a week, then you should start collecting \$200 a week from him. Realistically, you will probably get about three or four payments and then he will need to skip a week because things are tight and then you won't get any more from him ever again. The \$800 you did get is \$800 more than nothing. Be grateful you got that much.

During the last football season I ran the business, I wrote off more than \$300,000 in bad debt from customers who I then cut loose and refused to accept any more action from. Sounds like a ton of money that you are owed and people simply refuse to pay, doesn't it? That season we were winners to the tune of \$ 1.1 million from August 1st through the Super Bowl, less the \$300,000 in deadbeats. After paying expenses and bonuses from the remaining \$800,000, I sacked away my share of the profits for those six months—\$513,000. Most of your customers will pay in cash, on time, and in full, but some won't. When dealing with bad debt, keep your eyes on the forest.



## CHAPTER 10

# Bigger and Better



*T*o this point, we have discussed most of the basics involved in setting up shop and operating your own sports book. Once your client base has reached 200 or so, the profits should allow you to upgrade certain aspects of your business. Most of these improvements are not necessary, nor are they cheap. The upside is that they will make your life much easier and actually lead to increased efficiency and profits.

The most practical improvement you may choose to make probably will involve your phone system. From Chapter 2, you already know that you have a few different options involving phones. What I advocate is having two semipermanent locations. If you rent two separate apartments, for instance, you should pay the fee to the phone company so that you can choose a "vanity number" at the first location. The last four numbers being 8888 will be much easier for your customers (your paychecks) to remember than if they were 6182 or 3781.

At the second location, the one without the vanity number, have the phone company come out and change the wall jack in one of the

rooms so that you have three separate numbers coming out of the wall (we are assuming you work two phones). The first number will be used to stay connected to the Internet while you are working the shift. The second number will be a regular phone line, but you will want to pay the few dollars a month that it costs to have what the phone company calls "number hunting." This option means that if a call is placed to that phone and that phone is being used, you have designated a number that the call will be sent to. The number you designate will be the number of the third line in the room.

So the first line is used for the Internet, and the second and third lines are hooked into a two-line base with a headset so you can have virtually hands-free phone conversations. Before each shift, the vanity number in the first location is call-forwarded to the second line in the second location. Any call placed to the vanity number will ring the second line. If the second line is being used, the third line will ring. You can purchase a very nice two-line phone and headset for a couple hundred dollars at any good office supply store. One of the better things about this arrangement is that the first location (the one with the vanity number actually there) can be across the street or across town, and the forwarding works just the same. Always remember to unforward the phone after the shift is over. Any calls placed after you have closed will just get a ring until they decide to hang up. (P.S.: It is very important that you never have call waiting on any phone you are using for this business. Call waiting only winds up confusing the clerks and pissing off the customers. Trust me.)

Your next major upgrade should involve the computer you are using. Prices of these machines have continued to fall to the point where \$2,000 can buy you an entire system much more powerful than \$5,000 would have gotten you a year and a half ago. Spend an extra dollar or two on the system you purchase, and that should at least help you stay up with the technology game for another year after a cheaper computer would have become outdated. The reason you will want this new computer is because it will help with the second major upgrade you will purchase: sports book computer software.

Over the past few years, many new software issues have come out that have eliminated much of the pencil-pushing of bookies and clerks. There are now programs available that will do almost everything for you in an instant, eliminating hours of work for you after the games have ended. The bare essential program you should purchase is the latest version of SportsTracker by Jim Feist. Search for "Jim Feist" on the Web, and several different outlets to purchase this software will appear on your screen. What this program does is give you instant lines from 12 different casinos. You log on to your Internet carrier and then activate the program from the Internet. The lines you receive from SportsTracker are updated constantly. If a line moves at Caesar's Palace, you have it less than 10 seconds later. If the Stardust drops a game because of an injury, you know before your customers do. This software is designed specifically to give you updated, accurate lines, and that is exactly what it does. While this is a fantastic purchase and well worth the money, you may want to spend your dollars on the next level of software: programs that not only give you updated, accurate lines, but will also allow you to enter the plays from your customers directly into your computer as they call them in.

The best of these programs is from a company in Philadelphia and is called SportsBook 2000. Bozmax International markets this software, and when I stated earlier that some of the improvements you may choose are not cheap, this is what I was talking about. To get the latest version of this company's software, you will need to send in \$4,995. The price would seem high, but when you look at the long-term benefits of the purchase, you should begin writing the check immediately.

This software is similar to SportsTracker in that you log on to your Internet service provider and the program will provide you with all the available lines for whatever sports you choose. The difference with SportsBook is that instead of listening to the caller and writing his plays on the rice paper, you listen to the caller and type his plays in to the SportsBook 2000 program that is running on your computer. With the headset equipment we discussed earlier, you simply

click to answer a call and then enter the customer's action directly into your computer as he gives it to you.

Once the shift is over, turn off the computer and your effort for the evening is almost complete. When all the games have ended for that night, you log back on to your Internet source, start the SportsBook 2000 software, and the program will automatically calculate all the wins and losses for all the customers for that day's action. What previously required you to hire clerks is now done (error-free) by the computer. Also, instead of your waiting four or five hours after the games are over for your clerks to finish the grading and let you know who won and lost and for how much, the computer figures all of this in about 15 seconds and instantly produces an updated paysheet.

While saving you all kinds of time and effort, this program will also eliminate the need for at least one clerk, possibly two. As long as the wagers are entered correctly, the computer takes care of the rest. Investing in this program will save you time and money and give you a paysheet that is always correct. Additionally, the program, while expensive at first, doesn't get paid a salary, doesn't get paid a bonus, is never late, doesn't bitch and moan, and won't do something irresponsible that lands you in jail. There is a lot of upside to it.

You have now purchased the most convenient phone system and most helpful software available, as well as a computer that will run that software. Next? While at the office supply store buying phones, also purchase a backup power supply. It is a miniature generator with a built-in surge protector. Get one with six outlets and you will be able to plug in the computer monitor, the CPU, the printer (if you choose), and anything else you may need for doing business should the power go out. Having a backup power source means you will always have enough electricity to run the business for another hour or hour and a half should lightning strike a bit too close and leave you in the dark. Most shifts don't run much longer than that, so the backup should get you through the current shift with no problems. The point here is that a power failure in the middle of taking plays can be a disaster that is easily avoided with this purchase. Plan to spend approximately \$400 for a good one.

High-technology can be our friend in yet another way because of the advancements in digital tape. You may wish to purchase, as part of your phone system, a gadget that looks and works similarly to an answering machine but doesn't record incoming messages. Rather, it records all conversations on digital tape for whatever line it is attached to. This will eliminate a hassle with the customer who wagered \$1,000 on Arkansas and then claims that he really wanted LSU—you or your clerk must have just written it down wrong. If there is a dispute about that, simply place the customer on hold, get the tape for that day and fast-forward to his call. You can then press play and both of you can listen to the call again and end any disagreement about what the bet was. If you have good customers, most won't try to steal from you this way. Even if you have just a couple of callers that might resort to that, you will only have to break out the tapes once or twice before the liars and shitheels get the message.

A bit earlier when we discussed the basic truth that gamblers know gamblers, we could have expanded that to say that scam artists know other scam artists. Word will get around that you are an honest, reputable book that doesn't screw customers and doesn't allow them to screw you, either. The main drawback to earlier systems of recording calls was that the conversation was actually on cassettes and would be very damning as "Exhibit A." With digital tape, you simply hit one button and every word on the entire tape is erased immediately.

There are many other upgrades you can make, but most involve going from cloth desk chairs to leather or Papermate pens to Parker. The ones we covered are the ones that you will want to make as you begin gathering more cash than you ever knew existed. As you reach that point, you will have been in the business long enough to know what improvements will help your particular situation.

Remember, though, the new phones and new computer and new software are wonderful purchases, but someone still has to answer the phones and operate the computer and use the software. Don't fire all of your clerks, just some of them.

## CHAPTER 11

# Other Benefits of Being “The Man”

*(or More Reasons It's Better to Be on Your End of the Phone)*

**F**rom reading some of the earlier chapters, you probably understand by now that not every customer will be begging to pay you come Tuesday morning. Most of those not ready on settle-up day will pay you eventually, but it may be a day late or a week late or even longer, depending on the customer and the amount. Because of this, I personally led a revitalization of the barter system in Atlanta. You may not always get paid in cash, but if you are creative, a suitable alternative may be discovered.

The longer a customer has been calling you, the more you are likely to know about his personal life. This partly comes from taking his calls and listening to what is going on in the background as he speaks, as well as the places he asks to meet with you to settle up. You are not playing amateur detective or prying to find out secrets about your callers, but if the customers stops in midsentence and yells to someone that "we need more Bacardi on aisle four," you can bet he works at a liquor store. Based on the amount he usually wagers, you can guess whether he is the owner or just an employee. The caller who needs to see you on a Tuesday and says, "Go to

Anderson Cadillac and ask for the sales manager," has pretty much put his cards on the table.

Again, you are not trying to dig up private information on the folks you do business with. You are just paying attention, and most of your customers don't really care if you know where they work or what they do for a living. When a customer hits that losing streak that makes it near impossible to pay, he may actually offer up details about his vocation. Why? Because the customer wants to keep playing and, instead of paying money that would put a serious strain on his wallet, many times he will offer to trade off goods and services in order to pare away the amount he owes. If he has been promoted all the way up to drive-through at Burger King, you are likely to stick with accepting cash only. Many of your customers, on the other hand, will have a bit more desirable alternative to cash.

An Italian restaurant in Norcross, Georgia, became my favorite place to eat about three years ago. Yes, the food was good, but the owner was a New York Giants fan named Anthony, and every week during football season he would call in \$2,000 to \$5,000 on his favorite team. He paid me almost \$20,000 in cash before offering to host my birthday party at his restaurant in exchange for deducting \$5,000 from his balance. I usually was out at least that much after renting a private dining room and then paying for the food and open bar. The deal seemed good enough, and the party wound up being the best birthday bash I had ever thrown for myself.

Once football season ended, he was in a position to buy the space next to his restaurant and expand his place to include more tables for dining, as well as adding a bar. Needing some ready cash to help cover the construction costs, Tony decided to sell part ownership of the restaurant. The current value of 20 percent of the business was \$85,000. I got it for \$60,000 cash, as well writing off the remaining \$31,000 he owed me from football. The deal left me \$6,000 shy of the total he owed me, but I looked at it as I got a \$25,000 discount on one-fifth of a restaurant paying me a dividend of almost \$3,000 a month. What should have taken almost two and a half years to return the investment and begin being pure profit took

## OTHER BENEFITS OF BEING "THE MAN"

only 20 months (based on cash outlay on my part). Hell, I almost felt legit after seeing a legal document stating that I owned 20 percent of the restaurant. When the \$3,000 a month began coming in, I realized that it was almost like having a paycheck. If the business I ran came to an end the next day, I now had a real income that I could rely on. This led to my cutting similar deals with several other customers.

The first clerk I hired was a guy named Wendell. He had been a customer of mine and was always a super-nice guy, but (like everyone else who gambles) Wendell had lost his backside and decided to accept the offer to become my employee. Besides having a trustworthy, competent clerk, I also had a clerk who worked without pay for the first 3 1/2 months. I got part of a restaurant from Tony. Wendell gave me \$7,000 worth of free clerking. Sometimes you get apples, sometimes oranges. If it saves me money or makes me money, it's all the same to me.

Some more about Wendell. He enjoyed taking the train ride from near poverty to tons of cash (travel time: nine months). Wendell wanted to buy a house, though, and not many mortgage companies will give you a \$150,000 loan when you have no taxable income. Enter Thomas, known to me as account number 498. Thomas not only had part ownership of a carpet company, he also had a debt to me of about \$10,000. We settled on \$5,000 in cash and a W-2 form for Wendell showing that Thomas' carpet company had employed Wendell and paid him a salary of \$49,000 the previous year. Loan approved.

More perks? The director of surgery for one of the largest hospitals in Georgia operated on my mother at no charge . . . twice. A gambling debt of \$9,200 turned into five boxes of Cuban cigars after the owner of a local wine shop was disappointed in the 1998 NBA Finals (he loved Utah; Chicago wins in six). Instead of a cash Christmas bonus in 1997, each of my six employees got a new set of Ping irons. It seems the manager of a golf superstore in the suburbs north of Atlanta had a bad run in college football. I actually think he had the money, but instead of paying, he opened the store after hours for a small shopping spree that settled his debt. I already had pur-



chased new clubs, but the deal saved me \$3,000 in bonus money. You could do worse, I suppose.

The point here is that sometimes things besides cash can be about as good as cash. I couldn't go to the Mercedes dealership and give them six sets of golf clubs as the January, February, and March payments, but I could do that with the \$3,000 I didn't have to pay out in bonuses.

I probably didn't get full value in the cigar deal... actually there is no way that five boxes of Cubans should have cost me \$9,200, even if Castro himself delivered them to my front door. But the odds were I wasn't going to get the \$9,200 from the man who owed it to me. Instead of nothing, I got five boxes of some outstanding smokes. I actually have no idea how much a box of Cubans should cost, but I can't imagine they top out at \$2,000 per. Anyway, all the free sports tickets, meals, limousines, hotel rooms, bottles of wine, landscaping, etc., have been things I received for no actual cash out of my pocket. Often the trade of goods and services for erasing debt has been for things I would have had to pay money for. Sometimes that isn't the case, but even if I am given a 1 1/4-carat uncut diamond to wipe out a balance (I don't wear jewelry), the diamond is better than nothing, and nothing is what some customers try to leave you with.

We have talked about it already in this book, but it bears repeating: *the bookie is the one who gets rich in this arrangement*. Treat your customers with respect and be professional at all times and you will find many of your callers doing whatever they can to remain in your good graces. It's not because they want to be your best friend or share a locker with you or ride bikes after school. They want to stay on your roster of clients because they know that you treat them fairly and always pay when they are due money. A gentleman who owed almost \$14,000 offered to exchange 25 percent of his video blackjack machines to clean the slate. He had about a half a dozen machines in a couple of bars around Atlanta, so the deal put me out a little more than \$2,000 for each machine, and I chose to accept it. The first month, my 25 percent put \$800 in my pocket. I was looking at about a year and a half to reclaim my "investment" before

another monthly paycheck started. The day after I had told him I would accept the deal, I received a call from him thanking me for helping him out like I did. I managed to speak with a straight face while assuring him it was no problem—I just like helping people.

If you have a chance to get something instead of nothing, do it. If you have a chance to make a customer think you have done him a favor instead of pissing him off and making him feel threatened, do it. One of the main themes we have kept coming back to in dealings with your employees and customers is that common sense should be your guide.

While most customers never consciously think it, the bottom line in this business is that nobody has to pay, and if they choose not to pay, your response should be to do nothing about it other than not let him wager any more. The days of baseball bats and goon squads are over. Too many lawyers. Too many camcorders. Again, we stress common sense.

## CHAPTER 12

# What to Avoid

**W**e are to the point of fine-tuning your business now, and troubleshooting is part of that. Remember way back in Chapter 2, "Setting Up Shop"? Remember the list of items you were supposed to purchase before you turned on your phones for the first time? One of the things you bought at Wal-Mart was a bucket, and we discussed how the reason for needing the bucket was pretty obvious if you knew why, a few spots earlier on the list, we had specified rice paper. If the wrong type of visitor ever came knocking during a shift, it would be too late to go fill the bucket with water and start tossing the rice paper into it. Similarly, many of the things we will talk about in this chapter are preventative measures, meant to help you avoid trouble before it starts. Pay close attention and, if you can avoid most of the pitfalls mentioned, you will save yourself a ton of money, effort, and worry.

### **CHOOSE YOUR CUSTOMERS WISELY**

Most of what is contained in this chapter deals with common sense. At the top that list is what type of customers you take on. As

we have stated many times before, the point to being in this business is profit. You can have written a net \$100,000 worth of winners in a particular week, but the only figure that really matters is how much of that you then collect. While there is no way to guarantee that you will collect in full from a customer, there are some very basic things to consider when accepting new customers.

Obviously, ability to pay is a prime concern. Simple things like where he works, what type of car he drives, or the way he dresses can give you indications about what type of scratch this man should have when you are due to collect. If the guy says he can meet you to settle up anytime before midnight because that's when his shift at the Exxon starts, keep a close eye on his figure. If he gets more than a few hundred dollars down, you are getting to a situation where he may owe you a couple weeks' salary. Customers who earn a small income and make small plays (\$100 to \$200 a game) are worth having. A player like that will lose several thousand dollars in a year's time, and, if dealt with correctly, he will also pay several thousand dollars in a year's time. What he can't afford to do is lose and pay several thousand dollars in a week.

Keep an eye on his figure, remind him (in a respectful manner) that all money owed is expected to be paid, and, if need be, have an arrangement with him where his Tuesday settle-up figure is \$500, or anytime it gets to \$1,000. If he has had a bad run at the end of the week and his figure is \$1,200 on Friday morning, he is not allowed to play until he meets you and gets his figure back to zero. What this prevents is his losing another \$1,200 before Tuesday rolls around and owing you almost \$2,500. Again, be respectful, but keep in mind that your main goal is to collect as much as possible.

### **AVOID LETTING CUSTOMERS GET TOO FAR BEHIND**

Preventing a customer from getting completely buried is a way to make sure he continues playing and continues paying. You can collect \$500 from a small-time player 10 or 12 times a year. When

## WHAT TO AVOID

he loses that amount in one week is when he feels overwhelmed and decides to just not pay at all. Keep him under control, monitor his figure, and consider adjusting his settle-up terms. The meat tastes mighty good on that golden goose, but it is a one-time shot that way.

A specific scenario to be conscious of is when a newcomer calls you out of the blue halfway through a season and says, "So and so gave me your number, and he says he has been a customer for years and blah, blah, blah." This guy is wanting to start an account and knows one of your current customers. Usually you want your current customers to spread your name around like butter, hoping to get the interest of a potential customer in just this manner. Two things about this situation: first, tell your current customers to always let you know if they have given your number to someone and, second, have them give you the reason this guy is starting to gamble halfway through a season. Maybe he has just moved into town, maybe he has never wagered before and wants to start . . . maybe he has just run out on a debt with another bookmaker in town and has to find a new place to play.

Don't assume that all new callers are in this situation, but I can guarantee you that some are. Again, make sure that your current customers know to call you before their buddy starts calling. This gives you the opportunity to ask questions about the potential customer without his already having your number.

If you have put to use the information we talked about in Chapter 4 on getting customers, then you have already tapped into the type of guys who not only like to gamble but also have the money to pay after they lose. Your customers losing money to you is good. Your customers paying money to you is even better, so try to give yourself the best chance possible of collecting what is owed.

A gentleman's ability to pay is as important as it gets when considering a new customer. There is more to this than just saying, "Only take on new customers who are loaded with cash." That is a great concept, but you can't just introduce yourself at the local meeting of the Millionaire's Club and start adding new customers on the spot. Just as gamblers know other gamblers, rich men know other

rich men. Start with a modest but solid customer base. If you follow the guidelines in this book in regard to your dealings with clients, they will begin telling you about their coworker or neighbor or best buddy who would also like to start calling. Assume that the new customer will be of the same ilk as the person recommending him and go from there. Always keep in mind that there is a big difference between a customer's having the money to pay and the customer's actually paying. However, by closely monitoring the types of people you bring on, and under what circumstances, you are at least giving yourself the best chance possible when it comes time to collect.

### **TAKING ACTION ON YOUR FAVORITE TEAMS**

"ROLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLL, TIDE!!!!!" You may wake up in the morning yelling that. You may have the Alabama fight song wired to your car's horn. You may bleed crimson . . . well, actually everybody bleeds crimson, so that last one is probably a bad example, but you get the idea. You can be the biggest Alabama fan in the world, but you have to remember that Alabama doesn't put money into your pocket—your business does. By that, I am saying you must accept that sometimes you will have to root against your all-time favorite team. Hell, sometimes you not only have to root against them, you will have to pray for an ass-kicking of at least 23 1/2 points. I know bookmakers who have tried to avoid this in two ways. First, some bookies will take the game involving their favorite team "off the board," meaning they are not accepting any action on that game. In this way, it really doesn't matter, financially, what happens and the bookie can now pull for his favorite team again . . . bad decision. This will only serve to anger some of your customers and confuse the others. Remember that we play by Vegas rules, and if Vegas has a game available, so do we.

Second, some bookies will try to adjust the line enough so that no one will bet on Alabama or Missouri or UCLA or whomever. This is an even worse decision. If the Tide is playing Arkansas, and the line has good of Alabama favored by 6, that is what you should give your customers. "If I give my customers the game at 6, I will get cov-

## WHAT TO AVOID

ered in action on 'Bama and then have to pull against 'em!!" Too bad. Give the game at 6. If you adjust it up to 8 or 8 1/2 or whatever, you are creating a bad situation regarding your customers. Most of them have already seen the game in the paper or on TV or wherever with a 6-point line. Cheating them on what they know the line should be will only serve to drive them away.

Instead of doing that, keep in mind that no matter what you are pulling for, it will not actually affect the outcome of the game. Also, even if the customers do all play 'Bama and they win by a million, it is only one bet, and all winning a bet does to a customer is make him think he is actually good at gambling. You will eventually take back anything he may have won, plus a bundle. Bottom line? If the game is 6, just put it up at 6 and let the customers play whatever they choose. In the end, you will win money and they will lose money. That should be enough to soothe any hurt feelings about which teams you got to root for and which ones you didn't.

## DON'T BE TOO CHUMMY WITH YOUR CUSTOMERS

Avoid getting too chummy with your customers. If you have entered into business agreements with some of them, you will probably be seeing a lot more of one another. Occasions may arise where you have a drink or share a dinner or visit a gentlemen's club. You and three customers may play a round of golf. Nothing wrong with that. Just remember that your purpose is profit. While you can be friendly and enjoy being with your customers in a social setting, the rules that govern Tuesday still apply. Many clients would think that because you have gone to a baseball game together, settle-up day is a concern to other customers, but not them. The old saying, "Friendship is friendship, but business is business" comes to mind.

## DON'T CHECK ON SCORES CONTINUALLY

As an evening progresses, try to resist the temptation of checking the scores every five minutes. Calling to get score updates 15

times a night will only cause stress and probably prevent you from enjoying however you are passing time that evening. Similar to the team you pull for not affecting a game, the final score will not change, whether you get it two minutes after it is over or if you wait until the next morning. Once the bet is taken, it is no longer of concern to you. As my old boss Curtis used to say, "Don't give a damn what games the customer won or lost, just worry about how much he owes the next day." Sound advice that will save you a ton on Malox.

### **DON'T TAKE ACTION OUT OF THE OFFICE**

Finally, avoid taking action from people if you are not in the office. Many times I have had the clerks working the shift while I was on the golf course, at the game, etc. Without fail, the guys I was with would want to get a bet on a game. Sometimes I would just write the plays on a matchbook or napkin or whatever, and sometimes I would actually remember to call it in to my clerks. Most of the time, unfortunately, I would just wind up losing the plays or not giving them to the clerks or some similar type of lapse that would cause the paysheet to be wrong the next day. If a person you are with wants to get action on a game, offer your cell phone so he can call it in, but don't take the action on your own. Like many other things we have discussed here, following this guideline will save you money and mistakes.





## CHAPTER 13

# What Will Get You Caught?

*(Read This One Three or Four Times)*

**G**reed. Stupidity. Women. It is tempting to end the chapter there, but a bit of explaining is in order, especially since my girlfriend proofreads every chapter. Also, it never hurts to spend a little extra time on advice that will keep you out of county-issued clothing.

### **GREED**

We have covered the basics of this in several parts of the book, but it bears repeating. You can risk losing your entire business trying to collect \$400 from a customer who refuses to pay, but why? In the life of every bookmaker there are deadbeats who inspire the use of swear words and blunt objects. Cursing those customers is fine; doing your best O.J. on those customers is *not* fine.

If you enter this line of work, you are accepting that from time to time there will be customers whom you pay when they have won and then, when it is their turn to pay you, they will become invisible. No use in getting into specifics here, as it will only serve to anger

me, and the quality of the writing goes way down when that happens (I probably bordered on that in the middle of Chapter 6).

What you need to always keep in the front of your mind is that the longer you operate smoothly, the more profit you make. Be mad, be angry, be unpleasant, but also be open for business. If Wal-Mart were to set the hounds loose on every 9-year-old who swiped a Snickers, the profit margin on the candy aisle would increase, but the store itself would soon be closed. The same thing occurs in your business. Understand going in that you may write \$800,000 worth of winners during college basketball season, but you ain't gonna collect all of that. Wal-Mart figures in losses due to theft, and it seems to do all right every year. You should do the same.

## STUPIDITY

This section could also be titled "Laziness."

- If you have locked your keys in your car and you have six cell phones and 30 Las Vegas schedules in the backseat, you probably don't want to flag down a policeman and ask him to help you unlock your door. Pay the \$40 and wait the hour for a locksmith to come.
- If you are filing tax returns that show \$9,000 of income for the past year, you need to take the few extra days it may require to have your brother or best friend or whoever go to the dealership and buy the \$53,000 Mercedes. After that person has purchased it, you can "borrow" it to do your running around in. Have as little as possible in your name.
- If the walls of your office are so thin that you can hear the business conversations of the people next door, odds are they can hear yours. Take a few days to find a more suitable spot, hire some movers, and vacate quickly. Remain anonymous at all costs.
- If you are in the habit of going to bars or strip clubs, getting drunk, and flashing around stacks of cash, you should start

## WHAT WILL GET YOU CAUGHT?

drinking alone. You are setting yourself up for, at best, a robbery, or, much worse, being turned in by a dancer or disc jockey or bartender needing to cut a deal with the police.

These are just a few examples of things I have either witnessed or experienced. Do whatever you must to remain in business. This means sometimes you will not be able to take every shortcut, and sometimes you will actually have to do some work. With 95 percent of your workdays consisting of about three hours of work, those occasional days shouldn't be too much of a burden. If you do take necessary care to remain anonymous and to act responsibly while you are the main (only?) employee, you should soon be able to hire a clerk or two. At that point you can be much more immature and frivolous.

## WOMEN

The root of all evil, right? Well, if not, they are definitely not a positive cash-flow situation, and in this business, it is even more so. Ways women can cause you trouble as a bookmaker?

- Sometimes a customer's wife really may find his schedule and phone numbers, but the kind of woman that will ruin your situation won't threaten the husband first. She will go straight to the police from the outset. This is mostly out of your control. We will label it "bad luck."
- In Atlanta we had two main area codes, 404 and 770. As the 1996 football season began we, of course, got new phone numbers. After about a week of being open, I got a call one night on the office line from a woman saying, "If your customers don't quit calling my house trying to make bets, I am gonna call the police and give them this number!" When securing the new cell phone numbers, we had been unlucky enough to get the same number as this individual, only we had the 404, while she had the 770. This also goes into the "bad luck" category but is made worse by the "some of your

customers must be morons" category. I remade the tape that night, and before any lines were listed, reminded all callers that our numbers began with 404. After opening the tape with that for about the next week, it seemed the problem had solved itself. What made it frustrating is that only a woman would have called and reacted the way she did. I don't think a man would have called at all, and if he did he probably would have asked to get some action on the Monday night game.

- Under the "hell hath no fury" heading, women who have become ex-wives and ex-girlfriends are prime candidates to bring your operation to the attention of the police. Women are mean, spiteful creatures when they have been wronged and exact unreasonable measures of revenge. Hell, I had an ex-favorite stripper threaten to call the police when I started getting my table dances from another girl at the club I frequented. Be careful when getting involved with a woman, as far as letting her know all the nooks and crannies of your business.

*Point to remember:* The slightest fit of laziness or stupidity or greed can lead to bad things for you. When you are establishing your business, work hard and work intelligently. The spoils of bookmaking will be yours soon enough, and you can then hire a clerk to take most of the day-to-day burden of the business off your shoulders. Until that time, use as much common sense as you can muster and bide your time. If you have a good work ethic and good decision-making, your rewards are just around the corner.



# Final Thoughts

**A** better title for this chapter would be "Recurring Thoughts." The main idea of this book has been profit and how to maximize it. The only final thoughts I have all relate to making your business as successful as possible.

If you follow the guidelines set forth in the previous 13 chapters, you will be the owner/operator of a cash-producing sports book. As you open for business and begin growing your customer base, you will encounter situations that will test your patience. "How can I react to this in a way that will protect/help increase my profits?" should always be the question you ask yourself when a problem arises. There will be times when you would rather ask yourself, "How can I react to this in a way that will make me feel better?" and the answer you come up with is usually not going to be one that helps your bottom line. Remember that if a customer owes you \$1,500 and refuses to pay, you still have a lot of customers who owe and are going to pay. If you are spending the month of November on the beach in Costa Rica and the deadbeat is on the run from another bookie he cheated, who has come out ahead? Again, always keep your eye on the bottom line.

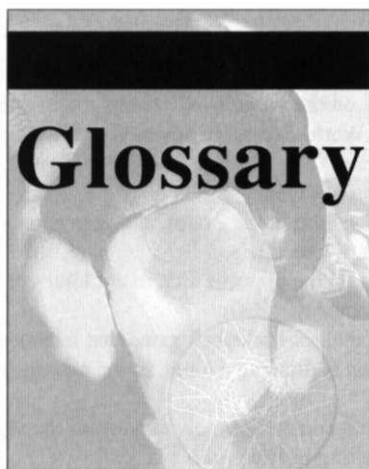
In the "minimize stress" department, *never* concern yourself with how a final score got that way. If your customers have all bet the Broncos, and Denver is losing the entire game only to come back and score 21 points in the final five minutes, so be it. You can get eaten up inside with anger and frustration and disbelief of how the top closer in the National League can give up five runs in the bottom of the ninth and, thus, cost you \$12,000. Both scenarios have happened to me and . . . so what? I still sit in the sand and drink alcoholic beverages out of coconut shells with little umbrellas in them. The customer still loses more than he wins and gives me his money. Yes, you will lose some games that were all but won, and, yes, it will piss you off to no end, but you are only making it tougher on yourself than it has to be. When the shift ends, leave the office and don't start watching the scoreboard until around midnight.

Late one Saturday night in the fall of 1993 I was at home watching the Air Force-Colorado State game. ESPN always has a Western Athletic Conference (WAC) game that starts at about midnight, and it is the last game on the schedule each week. I was still clerking for Curtis at the time and, in fact, he had leased a unit for me in the condo where he lived, on the floor below his. We needed Air Force for about a billion dollars that night. Actually, it was only about a \$60,000 swing between their winning and losing, but at the time, it seemed like a billion to me. Anyway, I was watching the game, and as the fourth quarter started, Air Force was winning by about 25 points. Suddenly, Colorado State turns the game into a track meet, winds up scoring four touchdowns in the final 10 minutes, and blows the game for us.

Just as the Colorado State receiver is crossing the goal line for the final score, I hear a scream and then, a few seconds later, a huge crash on the sidewalk below. Curtis had picked up his television, yanked it from the wall, and thrown it out the window. *That* made him feel better. It was not, however, the best thing for his bottom line. Besides the \$60,000 we lost on the game, he then had to pay another \$700 for a new television and nearly \$2,000 more to get the window and the frame replaced.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

Episodes like this are also why Curtis now has a pig valve in part of his heart and has to check his blood pressure four times a day. Don't be like Curtis. Follow what you have read in this book and look for me on the beaches. If you buy me a drink, Cuervo is my favorite. . . .



- action**—A wager of any kind, a bet. In baseball, you have "action" regardless of who does or does not pitch.
- beard**—A friend or acquaintance or other contact who is used to place bets so that the bookmakers will not know the identity of the actual bettor. Many top handicappers and persons in sensitive positions use this method of wagering.
- book**—An establishment that accepts wagers on the outcome of horse racing and sporting events.
- bookie**—A person who takes clients' bets.
- buck**—A \$100 wager.
- Canadian line**—A combination point line and money line.
- chalk**—The favorite.
- chalk player**—A gambler who usually only plays the favored teams, rarely betting on the underdogs.
- circled game**—A game in which the amount a customer is allowed to bet is limited; it usually occurs in games that feature key injuries, poor weather, or rumors regarding a team or player; most bookies circle all Ivy League games.
- cover**—To beat the spread by the required number of points; if your team does that, you have "covered the spread."
- dime or dime bet**—A \$1,000 wager.
- dog**—The underdog in any betting proposition.
- dog player**—A customer who mostly plays the underdog.
- dollar bet**—A \$100 wager.
- double bet**—A wager twice the size of a customer's usual wager; also known as a "double pop" or "doubling up."
- East Coast line**—Mainly used in hockey, which has a split-goal line versus a goal spread plus money line,
- even money**—A wager in which no vigorish or juice is laid.
- exotic wager**—Any bet other than a straight bet.



- futures**—Odds posted on the winners of various major sport championships (e.g., Super Bowl, World Series) in advance of the event, most often before the season has started.
- getting down**—Making a wager.
- handicapper**—A person who studies, rates, and wagers on sporting events or races.
- handle**—Total amount of bets taken.
- hedging**—Placing bets on the opposite side to cut losses or guarantee winning a minimal amount of money.
- hook**—A line on a football or basketball game that includes a half-point.
- hot game**—A game that is drawing a lot of action on one side by knowledgeable handicappers.
- juice**—The bookmaker's commission; also known as the vigorish.
- laying the points**—Betting the favorite.
- line**—The current odds or point spread on a particular event.
- middle**—To win both sides of the same betting proposition; betting the favorite team at -1.5 with one bookmaker and then taking +2.5 with another bookmaker; if the game ends with the favorite winning by exactly 2, you have then "middled" the game.
- newspaper line**—The betting lines that appear in the daily newspapers; the lines are only approximate and, most often, totally inaccurate and misleading.
- nickel**—A \$500 wager.
- off the board**—A game on which the bookmaker will not accept action.
- outlaw line**—An overnight line not used by casinos or offshore sports books.
- pick 'em**—When neither team is favored; take your pick and lay 11 to 10.
- press**—To bet a larger amount than usual, most often by a customer trying to get out of a financial hole.
- price**—The odds or point spread.
- puck line**—Mainly used on the East Coast with hockey, giving odds of a goal spread instead of a Canadian line where both a goal spread and money line are played.
- push**—Tie; neither side wins and all money is returned to the bettors.
- round-robin**—A series of three or more teams in two-team wagers.
- run line**—A line used when wagering on baseball.
- smart money**—Sides that are bet on by the more knowledgeable handicappers.
- sport player**—A person who waits for what he thinks is an unusually strong wager.
- steam**—When a betting line starts to move quickly; "steam games" do not necessarily reflect the correct side to bet, but they are the games that feature a sudden change in a starting lineup, weather, etc., and that the majority of bettors decide to key on.
- store**—A bookie.
- taking**—Wagering on the underdog; taking the odds.
- tout**—Someone who sells his expertise on sports or horse wagers.
- wise guy**—A well-informed or knowledgeable handicapper or bettor.
- wood**—Laying points.

- Have you ever wondered why the bookie *always* wins and you *always* lose?
- Do you want to know when your bookie will adjust the point spreads and in which direction?
- Would you like to give yourself the best chance possible of finally leveling the playing field with your bookie and start taking *his* money for a change?
- Could you run your own book?

If you have ever had any of these thoughts, *The Book on Bookies* is for you. Between the pages of this hot new book, you'll find all the answers you need to put the odds in your favor for a change. Never before has a book given you the exciting behind-the-scenes perspective of being in the bookie's office in the minutes just before the game begins, as the telephones ring off the wall and the bookie and his clerks scribble furiously to get all the action down. You will be taken step by step from the slow days of summer through the high-stake hours of Super Bowl Sunday to the supercharged opening weekend of March Madness.

The author, a successful retired bookie, reveals every aspect of a bookmaker's operation: setting up shop, finding customers, taking action, grading the homework, and collecting the money you are owed. Find out how successful bookies make hundreds of thousands of dollars a year taking book on professional or college sports—football, basketball, baseball, hockey, horse racing, boxing, NASCAR, and even golf. Learn about point spreads, straight bets, half-points, parlays, exactas and trifectas, teasers, exotics, sweeps, money lines and run-lines, matchups, and groupings. Everything you need to know to wager wisely . . . or be a bookie! This book will make anyone a winner!

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