

The background of the cover features a blue-tinted blueprint of a building's floor plan. Overlaid on this are several playing cards, including a diamond 10, a spade 10, a spade 9, and a spade 8, scattered across the top and middle sections.

The *New York Times* best-seller *Bringing Down the House* told the story of the infamous MIT students who won millions playing blackjack. **BLACKJACK BLUEPRINT** tells you how they did it, and how you can do it, too.

BLACKJACK BLUEPRINT

**HOW TO PLAY LIKE
A PRO ... PART-TIME**

RICK "NIGHT TRAIN" BLAINE

"A complete plan to winning at 21 by a Fortune 500 executive who's made hundreds of thousands at the tables without having to give up his day job."

Blackjack Blueprint

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**How to Play Like
A Pro ... Part-Time**

Rick “Night Train” Blaine

Huntington Press
Las Vegas, Nevada

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How to Play Like a Pro ... Part-Time

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to the memory of Sonny Boy.
Although we never had the opportunity
to play at the same table, he was the man from whom
I first learned about wagering.

Acknowledgments

Kevin Blackwood, who recently authored *Play Blackjack Like the Pros*, provided mutual feedback on our respective projects. Kevin has been very generous with information, as well as upbeat and encouraging.

George C. is a well-respected author and a former teammate, whom I nicknamed “the Legend.” A few years ago, when I had just ended a losing team bank, George provided me with an introduction to one of the best-financed advantage-play groups at the time. I hope to return the favor some day. Among the several books George has authored, *The Unbalanced Zen II* and *Shuffle Tracking for Beginners* are referenced in my book.

Anthony Curtis, after I told him of my plans to write a complete book, looked over the manuscript, and in the summer of 2003 told me, “I want to publish this.” Anthony is a dynamic individual and a workaholic. He also knows his business. With all the projects Huntington Press had going, coupled with Anthony’s being an icon on the Travel Channel, it’s been two years and it’s finally my turn. Experiencing the level of focus Anthony possesses and the marketing capabilities of Huntington Press has me excited. I’m grateful to Anthony.

Dustin Marks, author of *Cheating at Blackjack* and *Cheating at Blackjack Squared*, was kind enough to lend his expertise and review the chapter of my manuscript on the subject of cheating. My thanks to Dustin for the suggestions provided, which have added greatly to the project.

Richard W. Munchkin, author of *Gambling Wizards*, reviewed my chapters on Zone Tracking, Location Play, and Team Play. I'm grateful for the suggestions and insight from this most talented individual.

Viktor Nacht, a colorful figure who picked up the publishing of my second version of *Blackjack in the Zone*, jumped right in and added some pizzazz to the work. After that, in his first major publishing effort, Viktor rolled out Don Schlesinger's *Blackjack Attack 3, The Ultimate Weapon*, which is truly a masterpiece. Viktor has always been supportive of my projects. Thanks, Viktor.

Sal Piacente is the top gaming-protection expert in the world now that his mentor, Steve Forte, is retired. Yes, it's true that Sal works to protect the same casinos from which I attempt to use my skills to win money. However, we extend each other a professional courtesy. I won't play in any casino with which he works and he won't reveal my identity to anyone. Both of us being from Brooklyn, we know the value of one's word. Sal is also one of the top memory experts in the world. He was good enough to contribute his S.A.L. (Simple Associated Learning) memory system as part of the chapter on Location Play.

Mickey Rosa is one of the masterminds of the infamous MIT team and one of the most brilliant individuals in the advantage-playing arena. Mickey lent his expertise by looking over chapters of this book on Zone Tracking, Location Play, and Team Play.

Max Rubin can best be described as the power broker of the gaming world. His masterful book, *Comp City*, is one of the best-hidden jewels for advantage players. Reading Max's work gave me enormous insight, which led to my development of some new moves that still work to this day. Max's

support over the years is greatly valued.

Don Schlesinger, author of *Blackjack Attack 3, The Ultimate Weapon*, has been a most-valued supporter of all my projects. Don is a no-nonsense calls-it-like-he-sees-it type of guy. Most folks don't know that Don has read just about every book on the subject of blackjack and has offered his invaluable feedback to many of the authors. Over the years and through the production of the book you're about to read, Don has not only reviewed the overall content, but red-inked my manuscripts like a college English professor. Every author can benefit from Don's expertise, as he not only points out what needs to be corrected, but he also acknowledges what you did right. A fairer and more honest person is hard to find.

Arnold Snyder supported my authoring of two report-style books, both of which he published in 2000 as *Blackjack in the Zone* and *Blackjack Blueprint: How to Operate a Blackjack Team*. In November 2001, when Arnold asked me to write an updated version of *The Zone*, he provided some great suggestions on areas to add and expand on. He thought it would be brilliant if I could include his Red Seven and Zen Count systems from his *Blackbelt in Blackjack* book. Although Arnold left the publishing business prior to the release of this second version of *The Zone*, his support and encouragement during that time were key to its success. It was also Arnold who recommended that I combine the texts of both these works into a full-blast book, which is what you're about to read.

Norm Wattenberger is the developer of *Casino Vérité*, the number-one blackjack practice software. Norm is truly a brilliant programmer. He's also one of the easiest individuals to work with. While completing my manuscript, I approached Norm and asked if he'd be interested in developing a companion software product specifically for this book. Without hesitation, he said, "Sure." What more can I say?

To two South Florida investors who were not afraid to take a risk, I still say, "You guys are out of control," but we're still way ahead as this book is going to print. When you read this

book you'll know that I've kept my word not to reveal any specific locales. Thanks for your respect, confidence, and making 2005 a profitable year.

Huntington Press Staff: Deke Castleman spearheaded the nightmare of a project with the formatting of this book. Bethany Coffey's creative thinking helped move things in a new direction. Laurie Shaw worked out the graphics and did a marvelous job of layout and production.

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Introduction

Okay, here's another book on blackjack. After reading most of the books published on the game, playing for many years, and providing group and private instruction, I finally decided to put some ideas of my own together. People in the blackjack world tend to evaluate, compare, and critique card-counting systems, software programs, books, and theories as they encounter them. That's good, but it's essential to always keep an open mind. If you read a book, watch a training video, or take a lesson, you can glean at least one solid principle out of the presentation. We never stop being students of the game. Accordingly, there's something within these pages that can benefit players of all levels.

This book doesn't contain any "new breakthroughs" in card-counting systems. With several excellent systems already on the market (some of the good ones are included in this book), there are too many tough acts to follow. Rather, the differences in systems are discussed, enabling aspiring counters to select one that's suitable for them. But just knowing how to count cards isn't enough, and beginning and experienced players alike will gain valuable insight from the discussions of several important concepts and techniques that must be mas-

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tered to be a successful blackjack player.

Before attempting to apply card-counting skills in live play, it's necessary to have a solid understanding of the fundamentals of the game. Toward that end, this book covers such issues as:

- bankroll
- money management
- discipline
- game selection
- attitude
- interaction with casino personnel

One of the highlights of this book is the introduction of the Progressive Learning System (PLS), a technique that allows you to learn any card-counting system on the market in the most efficient and simplified manner.

If new to the game, after reading *Blackjack Blueprint* you will know what it takes to become a successful blackjack player and should be able to determine if playing in the manner that's outlined herein is for you. You'll be able to:

- Determine if card counting is something you have the ability and desire to do successfully.
- Select a card-counting system that works well for you.
- Master the PLS approach so you can learn the mechanics of almost any card-counting system.
- Take the skills acquired from this book and strategically apply them to live casino play.

As an existing player, *Blackjack Blueprint* will provide you with a means to:

- Learn other advanced techniques in a progressive manner.
- Evaluate the pros and cons of team play.

- Gain or enhance knowledge about tactical approaches to playing a winning game.

Here are a couple of quick pointers to facilitate the learning process while reading the book:

- If you see a term and you're unsure of its meaning, refer to the Glossary in the back of the book. Cards with rank ten, jack, queen, or king are referred to in the book as "10s."
- Don't be afraid of running into complicated mathematics. The goal is to present the material in a simple and clear manner. Many of the tactics discussed in this book come from personal experience in actual casino play.

The first question you need to ask yourself is: "Am I a gambler or a disciplined player?" A gambler is an "action player" who relies on luck and thrives on the excitement of casino play. Gamblers usually aren't winning players. A disciplined player is a calculating individual who has the patience and ability to evaluate a game and play only if the conditions appear favorable. Disciplined players can walk through a casino, evaluate the games at hand, and walk out without placing a bet if the conditions aren't favorable. When they bet, it's in good situations and this translates into winning over time. If you evaluate your own personality and determine that you've got what it takes to be a disciplined player, you'll benefit greatly from this book. The goal of *Blackjack Blueprint* is to educate you about the overall game, as well as the "games within the game." I hope you'll find this presentation helpful and profitable.

The Zones

The book is broken down into six "zones." As you progress through each, you'll enhance your knowledge of blackjack play.

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The Silver Zone

After familiarizing yourself with the rules of the game of blackjack, along with the house advantage, you'll learn how playing according to the proper basic strategy can minimize the casino's edge.

Covered in the Silver Zone are:

- the casino advantage at various games
- how blackjack is played
- basic strategy

The Red Zone

Applying the outlined Progressive Learning System (PLS), you'll develop a foundation of the basic skills needed to identify opportunities and play blackjack at an advantage.

Covered in the Red Zone are:

- selecting a card-counting system
- learning the fundamentals of card counting
- preparation for initial live casino play
- live casino play
- post-game evaluation

The Green Zone

Here, you'll fine-tune your skills and develop more tactical approaches to playing a winning game.

Covered in the Green Zone are:

- tactics necessary for betting at higher levels
- interaction with casino personnel
- money management
- avoiding detection

The Black Zone

Entering the Black Zone, you'll prepare to play high-stakes blackjack and add more to your arsenal, which is needed at this level of play.

Covered in the Black Zone are:

- the Internet as a source of blackjack information
- casino comps and travel strategies
- blackjack tournaments
- awareness of cheating
- zone tracking
- location play
- other advantage-play techniques

The Purple Zone

In the Purple Zone, you're taken through the team-play experience.

Covered in the Purple Zone are:

- recruiting players
- management
- training
- testing
- quality control
- security
- creating a team manual

The End Zone

Having reached the End Zone, you're given some final pointers to complete your blackjack education.

Covered in the End Zone are:

- high-roller strategies
- playing part-time
- recommended books and systems

***The
Silver Zone***

1

How I Got Started

In the late 1970s, I'd just finished college and moved back to the New York City area. In the fashion of many my age, I landed a job on Wall Street, along with an apartment in Manhattan (no BMW though, and my hair was still a bit long). Soon I became friendly with a neighbor whom I'll call Pete. Pete, a former federal agent, was wheelchair-bound. I used to talk to Pete for hours, as his stories fascinated me. He'd been all over the world and he knew a lot about surveillance, a topic that always amazed me. Pete had a part-time nurse who stopped in twice a week. But he wanted to be self-sufficient and did great on his own. I occasionally stopped by on my way to the supermarket to see if Pete needed anything.

One day I found him sitting at the kitchen table with a huge stack of playing cards and a few piles of paper clips. When I asked what he was doing, he said that he was teaching himself how to count cards to beat the casinos at blackjack. I paid him no mind and left. For some time, though, it seemed that whenever I visited Pete, he was involved in this routine.

Pete explained that card counting meant assigning a plus or minus point value to each card. By doing so, a counter could determine how to bet and play. Finally, after a few months of

practice, Pete told me he was ready to go to Atlantic City. I'd never been there, nor to *any* casino, but I told him that if he wanted to go, I'd take him on the bus. We decided to go on a Saturday morning.

It was late spring 1981. The bus fare was \$15 per person and they gave us coupons good for \$10 in coin upon arrival in Atlantic City. The bus was loaded with older folks, all of them excited about the trip. After a three-hour ride, we arrived at Bally's Park Place around noon. After we ate lunch, Pete asked me to take him to the blackjack tables. The place was crowded, and maneuvering Pete's wheelchair was no easy task. Finally, Pete pointed to a table with some empty spots and I took him over. He gave me the voucher for his roll of coins (dollars) and said he'd be okay there for about an hour. I left him and went to the slot machines with 20 silver dollars.

Observing the slot machine players, I quickly concluded that it was some sort of religion for those folks, some of whom were feeding coins into two or three different machines at a time. They seemed to have unbelievable coordination in doing so. Finally, I decided on a machine for myself, one next to an attractive young lady who completely ignored me. I ended up winning a little over \$300 playing slots, then took a stroll around the rest of the casino.

I saw a roulette wheel, and after watching for a while, placed a \$5 bet on red. I lost. On to the crap table, where lots of people were hooting and hollering. I'd done a little homework on craps and knew that when you rolled the dice, if you got a 7 or 11, you won, and if you got a 2, 3, or 12 you lost. That was all I knew. I asked someone to help me and ended up placing a \$5 bet on the pass line. The person rolling the dice rolled a 6 and it was explained to me that now the shooter had to roll a 6 before rolling a 7 for me to win. I scratched my head, confused, as the shooter rolled a 10. I didn't even want to ask what that meant. The next roll was a 7 and the dealer collected my chip.

Next it was on to the blackjack tables. I stood by a table and watched the game being dealt. At this point I knew only that

the object of the game was to get closer to 21 than the dealer, without going over 21. I sat down and clumsily handed the dealer \$50. He instructed me to place the money on the table, so I put the \$50 down on the circle in front of my seat. The dealer asked if I wanted to bet the \$50. I shook my head no. I had no way of knowing that the cash should not have been placed in the betting circle unless I wanted to bet it all.

After instruction on how to get change the proper way, I had 10 red chips in front of me, each valued at \$5. Two cards were dealt in front of me and I reached to pick them up. "Please don't handle the cards, sir," the dealer snapped at me. I apologized and proceeded to play, quickly learning the proper hand signals for hit and stand. Still, I noticed that the people at the table were upset with me. I couldn't figure out why, though I clearly remember friction over a hand on which I had two 8s. I don't recall what the dealer had showing, but a loud-mouthed person sitting next to me said, "You're gonna split those, I hope." I gave a puzzled look and said, "Split?" I ended up standing on the 16. After the round, the loudmouth mumbled a few choice words and left. I won \$100 at that table. Then it was time for me to check on Pete.

I walked over to his table and he asked me how I was doing. All excited, I told him about winning \$300 playing slots and \$100 playing blackjack. He whispered that he was winning and wanted to play some more. At this point we agreed that I'd check back with him in another two hours. I quit while ahead and went off for a stroll along the Boardwalk.

After the two hours, I returned to the casino to check on Pete and I noticed that the pile of chips in front of him was smaller than when I'd left. It was about 4:30 and Pete decided to call it a day. He asked if I wanted to have dinner. I nodded. He showed me a slip of paper and told me that dinner was free. Once again, I was puzzled. When we got to the restaurant, Pete told me that I could order whatever I wanted. He explained that after you gamble for a certain period of time, the casinos give you free meals, tickets to shows, and free rooms. My eyes

widened. I was amazed that all you had to do was gamble at the casinos and they would give you all these things for free. Pete told me that many people lose lots of money getting those free meals. As the saying goes: *There's no such thing as a free lunch*. Pete said that when I first checked in with him, he was winning, up about \$900. But when I returned two hours later, he'd lost all but \$50 of his winnings. Dinner was great, then we hopped on the bus home.

Although I never went back to Atlantic City with Pete, he made several trips down there over the next two years. I thought that because he was counting cards, he should be able to win money. Based on my talks with him, however, Pete seemed to lose more than he won. But win or lose, it all seemed too complicated for me to worry about.

In December 1983, Pete moved away, leaving me with a box of books and some other odds and ends he thought I might find interesting. After a couple of months, I finally had time to sort through the box and found several decks of cards and a hardcover book titled *Million Dollar Blackjack*. I noticed that it was autographed by the author, Ken Uston. I decided to keep the book and the cards and soon I began reading the book.

To this day, I still consider *Million Dollar Blackjack* to be one of the most informative and entertaining books on the game ever written. I read through that book chapter by chapter, stopping to practice the drills as they were presented. I was on my way.

Throughout this book are more details of my experiences with playing the game at various levels—for example, how I got involved with blackjack teams and my journey of playing at high-stakes for more than 20 years. At the time of this writing, I can still confidently walk into a casino and play a winning game. I'll end this chapter with some notes from my diary of the final days of a recent play:

Thursday Night/Friday Morning

My final plunge. Hit the tables at 11:15 p.m. and got a private table in the VIP Room. During several wild sessions throughout the evening and into the early-morning hours, I went from down \$50,000 to winning \$22,900. Took \$36,000 in my last shoe. Then played Friday afternoon in one final session and won \$12,500, putting my trip total at \$5,000. It was a long night/morning!

Friday Night/Saturday Morning

Decided to sleep a good deal of the day Friday, to squeeze in one last play before leaving for home. This time I arrived as the VIP Room opened for the evening and continued with the aggressive style of play. I opened up the table, with no other players. After three shoes, I was up \$46,000, putting my overall trip total at \$51,000. A couple of other players joined the table, so I left. I'm done.

I'm glad to be going home, as the trip was a bit tiring. The swings were wild and I'm pleased I ended up with a decent enough win.