



the **INSIDE** Straight™

ONLINE
SURVEY
AHEAD

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Dear Poker Supporter,

Another show is wrapped up and – for many – another fiscal year is in the bag. In this issue we'll review video poker highlights from the show, reveal some useful chip upgrade information, shine a spotlight on the innovative Ameristar property in St. Charles, and we'll put some perspective on the value of video poker in your casino.

G2E 2005 – Whew! Big, loud, busy and over

At this expo, our Action team focused on staying with what works. Finding the balance of completely new games, and coming up with the next big "Triple Play™" game sensation is a constant challenge. Based on what we heard from those who visited the booth – which was just about everyone – it appears we're on the right track with the games that are coming up soon. Check out a few of the winners we introduced at the 2005 show in our G2E recap.

Chip Tips

In addition to what's in the bill acceptor or hopper of your video poker machines, there's real value to be tapped in the EPROM chips that drive your poker games. IGT's Nevada Senior Poker Specialist, Nikol Abelman, shows how you may be able to increase revenues at no cost – and give players more poker action – simply by checking your game chips.

Ameristar Casino, St. Charles

While we're in the field, Mike Drummond takes us on an insider's tour of the Ameristar Casino, with a look at some of the imaginative things they're doing to enhance the performance of their video poker area. There's a new floor plan, hot new games, an innovative approach to carousel configuration, and a new hotel on the horizon.

The Value of Video Poker

Our motto has long been "Poker Rules," and John reinforces this point when he lays paytables on the line with straight-ahead facts that demonstrate why and how video poker can become one of the best profit centers in your casino.

So settle back and enjoy your newsletter. There's plenty here to keep your wheels, reels and deals turning!

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2006

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The Global Gaming Expo just gets better and better. Visitors to our 2005 booth had a lot of fun at the smoothie bar, enjoyed endless popcorn, and got a hands-on look at our newest video poker games. We even had a few serious moments when we conducted business!

Now that you've had time to recover from the ordeal and reflect on all you saw, we'd love to know what you thought of our games. Sound off! We've set up a special online form you can use to comment on the video poker games we introduced at the show, and request information on those of special interest to you. Your opinion



is important to us, and we'll reward you with a custom T-shirt in exchange for the time you spend answering the few survey questions. Visit our web site at www.IGT.com/VideoPoker, and click the survey link on the page.



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What's In Your Poker Machine?

By Nikol Abelman

Although the Triple Play™ Draw Poker game has been entertaining players and earning profits for casinos for more than eight years, you'd be surprised – or maybe not – by how many “old” EPROM chips are still in the field chugging away with the same setup as the day they were first put into service.

When games are doing well, conventional “if-it-ain't-broke-don't-fix-it” thinking dictates that there's no reason to look at how your machines are configured; just leave well enough alone. This has definitely been the case with the Triple Play™ Poker game. It's a familiar player favorite – like a comfortable pair of shoes – but imagine how nice it would be to give those shoes a bright new shine.

Are the video poker games in your casino living up to their full profit potential? Maybe. Is there more you could do to maximize your investment? Quite possibly! Chances are you have a Triple Play™ game out on the floor that actually has Five Play® capability built in – but that free feature has not been activated. You may even be only using a single denomination that could easily be changed to offer players multi-denomination choices.

I've been to a number of properties where this has been just the case. The Triple Play™ game and its derivatives have changed the “face” of video poker, but it's up to you to make sure you're getting the most out of each machine. Why not schedule a regular review of game configurations to make sure you're taking advantage of all the revenue-enhancing/money-making features that are included in your existing game chips? Think about it. How often these days can you increase your profits at no cost? The chip's in your court – or call us and we'll help out. While you're at it, be sure to look for the review of Customer Notifications (CNs) affecting video poker in the February 2006 issue of our sister publication, the Point to Point™ newsletter.

As a side note, but definitely no less important, make note of the pink label serial number located on each game's “M” chip. While the EPROM enables you to enhance the functionality of the game, by checking the EPROM serial number you can also help ensure your billing is accurate.



It's never too late. Check to see how your games are set up, and fine-tune the available options to take advantage of all the earning potential that comes with each game chip. If time is money, take some time and make some money by giving players what they want, which in turn will give you the best return on your investment.



A New Bag of Tricks for 2006

Lights. Excitement. Glitter. Adventure. It's everywhere all the time in Las Vegas, but for three incredible days and as many outrageous nights, the very essence of gaming is distilled into an extravaganza that is the Global Gaming Expo – G2E – where we unveil the games that are destined to transform your casino.

In case you missed it, the Action Gaming end of the IGT booth stirred up quite a buzz with a must-see showing of hot new progressives, hot new graphics, and some of the coolest new poker themes since the introduction of our multi-hand games. What you see on these pages is but a tease of what's in store for you in the New Year and beyond.



Talk about your "all stars," IGT Director of Video Poker, John Daley, is flanked by the smoothie servers who kept booth visitors smiling and refreshed, handing out more than 5,000 smoothies this year. Oh yes, the All-Star Poker™ game was something of a sensation, too!



The Super Times Pay™ and Spin Poker™ games got together at G2E to create quite a stir with the new combination Super Times Pay™ Spin Poker™ game. This blending of two top performers into one game really wowed 'em with wide cross-over appeal for video poker and reel slot players alike.

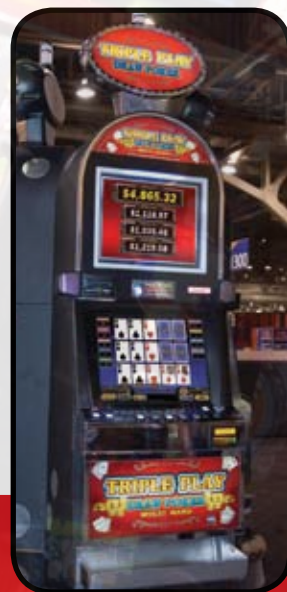


With so many great video poker offerings, you can experience a real dilemma deciding which games will have the broadest draw for your players. Solve that problem with All-Star Poker™, the game that allows players to pick from 8 of 10 of their favorite multi-hand games – the video poker "all stars" they love to play. This game was so popular in the booth that we thought you'd like a good look at it here without a crowd gathered around.

Ready for poker night with a few close friends? The Opponent Poker™ game lets you play your favorite video poker game against a couple of animated "computerized challengers" for a pot that can grow to tantalizing proportions. This is a sure-fire thriller for 2006. The lifelike animations bring a new dimension to the virtual table. If you missed this in the booth or didn't make it to the Expo, call your account representative for more information on the Opponent Poker™ game. Your players are going to love it!



The new Multi-Strike™ Super Times Pay™ Poker game gives players the best of two top performers – we're talking about the winning game combination here, not our lovely models. The marriage of these themes creates an exciting new offering your players will love. If you missed getting your hands on this one in the booth, drop us a line for more information!



Progressive jackpots really grab players. Operators were pretty impressed, too, when they saw the impact of large meters in the top box video display of the Triple Play Draw Poker™ game using a built-in LCD screen. Aside from saving the cost and space requirement associated with overhead signage and controllers, large on-screen meters let players get up close and personal with their progressive poker games. This is a look you're going to see a lot of very soon. When released in April, this game will have the added appeal of the Game King® TrimLine 19" upright cabinet.

Executive Vice President of Action Gaming, Mike Fields, entertains Tammy Couchman, Director of Slots for the Par-A-Dice Casino of Illinois, after hours during IGT's customer appreciation party at the fabulous Wynn Casino.



The Not-So-Obvious Value of Video Poker

By John Daley

Why would anyone want to put video poker on their floor when you generally have to offer 97%, 98%, or higher payback percentages to generate good solid play, especially when you can offer spinning reel or video slots at 92%, 90%, or even tighter payback percentages?

Why indeed?! Well how about the fact that the typical video poker player will return to play two, three, or more times a week? How about player loyalty to your property? Or the fact that video poker players will spend far more time on the game and in your casino than your typical slot player?

At the end of the day what really matters is the win of the game, not the hold percentage. If you're able to generate consistent, profitable revenues that are house average or above on your video poker games, does it really matter if the hold percentage is only 3%?

If players are given a fair game, they'll become some of your best and most loyal customers. But if your casino only offers 96% and below poker, players feel it – even if they don't fully understand the payable – and will not become the reliable, long-term player you (and your competitors) are seeking.

When video poker games are placed properly, set up properly, and the right number of machines is on the floor, you can create a great base of very loyal players. Because activity breeds activity in the casino world, having players filling seats and creating the feel of action and excitement will help keep them in your casino.

You need at least some rewarding paytables on the floor to make video poker work. If you expect to attract loyal players who will return time and again you need to be in the 98% range with at least 10%

of your video poker offering. (True, there are isolated markets where casinos can get away with "tight" paytables, but they're getting more rare as gaming expands.)

If your casino does not get good video poker play, examine how you have your machines set up. If they're too tight, loosen some of them and advertise the changes. Put paddle toppers on your machines to let players know your games are now looser. Tell players about it in monthly mailings, and put table tents in the restaurants and bars. To paraphrase a line from *Field of Dreams*, "Build it and they will come," how about "Loosen the games and they will play!"

Validate this theory for yourself. Once changes have been made and players have become aware of the new and better paytables, look at the percentage of video poker on your floor versus the win percentage of video poker on your floor. If you're generating 16% of your slot win from video poker and only 10% of your floor is video poker, you need to add more machines. However, if you're generating 16% of your win from video poker and 30% of your floor is video poker it's time to convert some of those games to Game King® video slot themes.

If you have questions about your video poker inventory and would like setup or configuration ideas, contact your Video Poker Product Specialist and he or she will be happy to assist you. If you need the name or number of your Specialist you can reach IGT's dedicated Video Poker department at 702-896-8201, or e-mail me personally at John.Daley@IGT.com.



Poker Face-Lift

By Mike Drummond

There are many changes going on at the Ameristar Casino in St. Charles, Missouri. If you haven't dropped by in a while, you owe yourself a field trip. Come on over for a look. They have a great selection of video poker games with good paytables and multi-denomination options.

One of the truly hot themes at Ameristar is the Super Times Pay™ Poker game. They have 20 of these lined up on a wall, and have added a bank of 8 more to their floor. If you haven't played this game recently, I suggest you give it a try. It's cool, and Ameristar's players have been eating it up and asking for more.

In another novel twist, Ameristar is making creative use of the Multi-Strike Poker® game – a proven performer that continues to crank out good numbers – and its multi-hand sibling, the new Five Play® Multi-Strike™ Poker game. With the Five Play® version, players enjoy some great rides, and operators are extremely happy with the game's performance.

As you explore the casino, you'll see Ameristar has added a nice complement of Five Play® Multi-Strike™ Poker games. They've even

set up a carousel that includes some of the original Multi-Strike™ game, side-by-side with Five Play® Multi-Strike™ machines. This is a great setup, but you'll still find it tough to get a seat at one of these games.

It's not Psych 101, but by including both game versions right next to each other, they introduce single hand Multi-Strike™ players to a new level with the Five Play® Multi-Strike™ game. Who knows? Players who look for Five Play® themes may just sit down and give one of these two games a shot.

Successful operators – like Ameristar – are those who deploy multi-denomination options, select good paytables and/or sliding paytables, maintain machines in tip-top shape, and move banks of games around to create a more player-friendly appeal. For those astute operators, it's no wonder video poker is on the rise.

The next time you drop by the Ameristar things may look a little different, but the players will still find their favorite games to play – now with a new look that's sure to keep them coming back for more.

As if all this action in the casino weren't enough, Ameristar has also broken ground for their new 400-room, all-suite hotel which will include an indoor-outdoor pool, a spa, and an additional 2,000-space parking garage. Completion is targeted for the fourth quarter of 2007. I've visited their Kansas City property and that's a fabulous example of what's to come to St. Charles.



Check Out This “All-Star” Lineup!



Baseball Score Sheet

Team	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
Home											
Guest											

Player Up! Contact your IGT account executive for more information.

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