

Gambler sues casino, says he lost \$500,000 playing drunk

Written by Administrator
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A view of the Las Vegas Strip seen on March 26, 2011 in Las Vegas, Nevada.
Ethan Miller/Getty Images

LAS VEGAS -- A businessman who lost \$500,000 on table games at a Las Vegas casino on Super Bowl weekend is arguing that he shouldn't have to pay because he was blackout drunk.

Southern California gambler Mark Johnston, 52, is suing the Downtown Grand for loaning him money and serving him drinks when he was visibly intoxicated.

Nevada law bars casinos from allowing obviously drunk patrons to gamble and from serving them comped drinks.

Johnston's attorney, Sean Lyttle, says the Grand, which opened last November in the old part of Las Vegas, intends to pursue Johnston for trying to shirk his gambling debts. Johnston put a stop-payment order on the markers, or casino credits, the Grand issued, and is also seeking damages from the Grand for sullyng his name.

Johnston says he was thoroughly drunk during the hours he spent playing pai gow and blackjack at the Grand. His legal team plans to rely on eyewitness testimony and surveillance video to prove that he was visibly intoxicated.

Johnston lives in Ventura and made his fortune in car dealership and real estate ventures.

The Grand issued a statement saying it does not comment on pending litigation.

The state Gaming Control Board is investigating.

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"It's certainly an extraordinary case. This is not a story that I've ever heard before, where someone was blackout intoxicated where they couldn't read their cards, and yet a casino continued to serve them drinks and issue them more markers," Lyttle said. "It's a very heavy-handed and unusual approach that we haven't seen in this town in a long time."

Johnston arrived in Las Vegas with the woman he was dating on the Thursday before the Super Bowl. He drank in the limousine from the Las Vegas airport to the Grand, drank more during dinner with friends, and then says he blacked out.

The suit alleges that the Grand comped him dozens of drinks while he gambled away hundreds of thousands of dollars, finally sleeping off his drunkenness on that Saturday, which was Feb. 1. Johnston says he didn't learn how much he had lost until the next day.

In 2009, a [gambler who famously lost \\$127 million sued a Vegas casino](#), claiming staff regularly plied him with alcohol and painkillers in order to keep him gambling. He eventually [cut a deal](#) with the casino and criminal charges against him were dropped.

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